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GEORGE MEREDITH

SANDRA BELLONI

ORIGINALLY

EMILIA IN ENGLAND

VOL. I

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1910

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FIR WOODS, COPSHAM . . . . *Frontispiece*

The author lived at Copsham Cottage when writing *Sandra Belloni*.

THE WOODS AT OXSHOTT . . . *Facing page* 168

Scenes in Emilia in England were intimately associated in the author's mind with the woods in the neighbourhood of Oxshott and Copsham.

The above are from photographs taken in 1909 *by Frederick H. Evans.*

SANDRA BELLONI

VOL. I

SANDRA BELLONI

ORIGINALLY

EMILIA IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

THE POLES. PRELUDE

We are to make acquaintance with some serious damsels, as this English generation knows them, and at a season verging upon May. The ladies of Brookfield, Arabella, Cornelia, and Adela Pole, daughters of a flourishing City-of-London merchant, had been told of a singular thing: that in the neighbouring fir-wood a voice was to be heard by night, so wonderfully sweet and richly toned, that it required their strong sense to correct strange imaginings concerning it. Adela was herself the chief witness to its unearthly sweetness, and her testimony was confirmed by Edward Buxley, whose ear had likewise taken in the notes, though not on the same night, as the pair publicly proved by dates. Both declared that the voice belonged to an opera-singer or a spirit. The ladies of Brookfield, declining the alternative, perceived that this was a surprise furnished for their amusement by the latest celebrity of their circle, Mr. Pericles, their father's business ally and fellow-speculator; Mr. Pericles, the Greek, the man who held millions of money as dust compared to a human

voice. Fortified by this exquisite supposition, their strong sense at once dismissed with scorn the idea of anything unearthly, however divine, being heard at night, in the nineteenth century, within sixteen miles of London City. They agreed that Mr. Pericles had hired some charming cantatrice to draw them into the woods and delightfully bewilder them. It was to be expected of his princely nature, they said. The Tinleys, of Bloxholme, worshipped him for his wealth; the ladies of Brookfield assured their friends that the fact of his being a money-maker was redeemed in their sight by his devotion to music. Music was now the Art in the ascendant at Brookfield. The ladies (for it is as well to know at once that they were not of that poor order of women who yield their admiration to a thing for its abstract virtue only)—the ladies were scaling society by the help of the Arts. To this laudable end sacrifices were now made to Euterpe to assist them. As mere daughters of a merchant, they were compelled to make their house not simply attractive, but enticing; and, seeing that they liked music, it seemed a very agreeable device. The Tinleys of Bloxholme still kept to dancing, and had effectually driven away Mr. Pericles from their gatherings. For Mr. Pericles said: 'If that they will go "so," I will be amused.' He presented a top-like triangular appearance for one staggering second. The Tinleys did not go 'so' at all, and consequently they lost the satirical man, and were called 'the ballet-dancers' by Adela: which thorny scoff her sisters permitted to pass about for a single day, and no more. The Tinleys were their match at epithets, and any low contention of this kind obscured for them the social summit they hoped to attain; the dream whereof was their prime nourishment.

That the Tinleys really were their match, they acknowledged, upon the admission of the despicable

nature of the game. The Tinleys had winged a dreadful shaft at them; not in itself to be dreaded, but that it struck a weak point; it was a common shot that exploded a magazine; and for a time it quite upset their social policy, causing them to act like simple young ladies who feel things and resent them. The ladies of Brookfield had let it be known that, in their privacy together, they were Pole, Polar, and North Pole. Pole, Polar, and North Pole were designations of the three shades of distance which they could convey in a bow: a form of salute they cherished as peculiarly their own; being a method they had invented to rebuke the intrusiveness of the outer world, and hold away all strangers until approved worthy. Even friends had occasionally to submit to it in a softened form. Arabella, the eldest, and Adela, the youngest, alternated Pole and Polar; but North Pole was shared by Cornelia with none. She was the fairest of the three; a nobly-built person; her eyes not vacant of tenderness when she put off her armour. In her war-panoply before unhappy strangers, she was a Britomart. They bowed to an iceberg, which replied to them with the freezing indifference of the floating colossus, when the Winter sun despatches a feeble greeting messenger-beam from his miserable Arctic wallet. The simile must be accepted in its might, for no lesser one will express the scornfulness toward men displayed by this strikingly well-favoured, formal lady, whose heart of hearts demanded for her as spouse, a lord, a philosopher, and a Christian, in one: and he must be a member of Parliament. Hence her isolated air.

Now, when the ladies of Brookfield heard that their Pole, Polar, and North Pole, the splendid image of themselves, had been transformed by the Tinleys, and defiled by them to Pole, Polony, and Maypole, they should have laughed contemptuously; but the terrible nerve of

ridicule quivered in witness against them, and was not to be stilled. They could not understand why so coarse a thing should affect them. It stuck in their flesh. It gave them the idea that they saw their features hideous, but real, in a magnifying mirror.

There was therefore a feud between the Tinleys and the Poles; and when Mr. Pericles entirely gave up the former, the latter rewarded him by spreading abroad every possible kind interpretation of his atrocious bad manners. He was a Greek, of Parisian gilding, whose Parisian hat flew off at a moment's notice, and whose savage snarl was heard at the slightest vexation. His talk of renowned prime-donne by their Christian names, and the way that he would catalogue emperors, statesmen, and noblemen known to him, with a familiar indifference, as things below the musical Art, gave a distinguishing tone to Brookfield, from which his French accentuation of our tongue did not detract.

Mr. Pericles grimaced bitterly at any claim to excellence being set up for the mysterious voice in the woods. Tapping one forefinger on the uplifted point of the other, he observed that to sing abroad in the night air of an English Spring month was conclusive of imbecility; and that no imbecile sang at all. Because, to sing, involved the highest accomplishment of which the human spirit could boast. Did the ladies see? he asked. They thought they saw that he carried on a deception admirably. In return, they inquired whether he would come with them and hunt the voice, saying that they would catch it for him. 'I shall catch a cold for myself,' said Mr. Pericles, from the elevation of a shrug, feeling that he was doomed to go forth. He acted reluctance so well that the ladies affected a pretty imperiousness; and when at last he consented to join the party, they thanked him with a

nicely simulated warmth, believing that they had pleased him thoroughly.

Their brother Wilfrid was at Brookfield. Six months earlier he had returned from India, an invalided cornet of light cavalry, with a reputation for military dash and the prospect of a medal. Then he was their heroic brother: he was now their guard. They loved him tenderly, and admired him when it was necessary; but they had exhausted their own sensations concerning his deeds of arms, and fancied that he had served their purpose. And besides, valour is not an intellectual quality, they said. They were ladies so aspiring, these daughters of the merchant Samuel Bolton Pole, that, if Napoleon had been their brother, their imaginations would have overtopped him after his six months' inaction in the Tuileries. They would by that time have made a stepping-stone of the emperor. 'Mounting' was the title given to this proceeding. They went on perpetually mounting. It is still a good way from the head of the tallest of men to the stars; so they had their work before them; but, as they observed, they were young. To be brief, they were very ambitious damsels, aiming at they knew not exactly what, save that it was something so wide that it had not a name, and so high in the air that no one could see it. They knew assuredly that their circle did not please them. So, therefore, they were constantly extending and refining it: extending it perhaps for the purpose of refining it. Their susceptibilities demanded that they should escape from a city circle. Having no mother, they ruled their father's house and him, and were at least commanders of whatsoever forces they could summon for the task.

It may be seen that they were sentimentalists. That is to say, they supposed that they enjoyed exclusive possession of the Nice Feelings, and exclusively comprehended

the Fine Shades. Whereof more will be said; but in the meantime it will explain their propensity to mount; it will account for their irritation at the material obstructions surrounding them; and possibly the philosopher will now have his eye on the source of that extraordinary sense of superiority to mankind which was the crown of their complacent brows. Eclipsed as they may be in the gross appreciation of the world by other people, who excel in this and that accomplishment, persons that nourish Nice Feelings and are intimate with the Fine Shades carry their own test of intrinsic value.

Nor let the philosopher venture hastily to despise them as pipers to dilettante life. Such persons come to us in the order of civilization. In their way they help to civilize us. Sentimentalists are a perfectly natural growth of a fat soil. Wealthy communities must engender them. If with attentive minds we mark the origin of classes, we shall discern that the Nice Feelings and the Fine Shades play a principal part in our human development and social history. I dare not say that civilized man is to be studied with the eye of a naturalist; but my vulgar meaning might almost be twisted to convey that our sentimentalists are a variety owing their existence to a certain prolonged term of comfortable feeding. The pig, it will be retorted, passes likewise through this training. He does. But in him it is not combined with an indigestion of high German romances. Here is so notable a difference, that he cannot possibly be said to be of the family. And I maintain it against him, who have nevertheless listened attentively to the eulogies pronounced by the vendors of prize bacon.

After thus stating to you the vast pretensions of the ladies of Brookfield, it would be unfair to sketch their portraits. Nothing but comedy bordering on burlesque could issue from the contrast, though they graced a

drawing-room or a pew, and had properly elegant habits and taste in dress, and were all fair to the sight. Moreover, Adela had not long quitted school. Outwardly they were not unlike other young ladies with wits alert. They were at the commencement of their labours on this night of the expedition when they were fated to meet something greatly confusing to them.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPEDITION BY MOONLIGHT

Half of a rosy mounting full moon was on the verge of the East as the ladies, with attendant cavaliers, passed, humming softly, through the garden-gates. Arabella had, by right of birth, made claim to Mr. Pericles: not without an unwontedly fretful remonstrance from Cornelia, who said, 'My dear, you must allow that I have some talent for drawing men out.'

And Arabella replied: 'Certainly, dear, you have; and I think I have some too.'

The gentle altercation lasted half-an-hour, but they got no farther than this. Mr. Pericles was either hopeless of protecting himself from such shrewd assailants, or indifferent to their attacks, for all his defensive measures were against the cold. He was muffled in a superbly-mounted bearskin, which came up so closely about his ears that Arabella had to repeat to him all her questions, and as it were force a way for her voice through the hide. This was provoking, since it not only stemmed the natural flow of conversation, but prevented her imagination from decorating the reminiscence of it subsequently (which was her profound secret pleasure), besides letting

in the outer world upon her. Take it as an axiom, when you utter a sentimentalism, that more than one pair of ears makes a cynical critic. A sentimentalism requires secresy. I can enjoy it, and shall treat it respectfully if you will confide it to me alone; but I and my friends must laugh at it outright.

'Does there not seem a soul in the moonlight?' for instance. Arabella, after a rapturous glance at the rosy orb, put it to Mr. Pericles, in subdued impressive tones. She had to repeat her phrase; Mr. Pericles then echoing, with provoking monotony of tone, 'Sol?'—whereupon 'Soul!' was reiterated, somewhat sharply: and Mr. Pericles, peering over the collar of the bear, with half an eye, continued the sentence, in the manner of one sent thereby farther from its meaning:—'Ze moonlight?' Despairing and exasperated, Arabella commenced afresh: 'I said, there seems a *soul* in it'; and Mr. Pericles assented bluntly: 'In ze light!'—which sounded so little satisfactory that Arabella explained, 'I mean the *aspect*'; and having said three times distinctly what she meant, in answer to a terrific glare from the unsubmerged whites of the eyes of Mr. Pericles, this was his comment, almost roared forth:

'Sol! you say *so-whole*—in ze moonlight—Luna? Hein? Ze aspect is of Sol!—Yez.'

And Mr. Pericles sank into his bear again, while Wilfrid Pole, who was swinging his long cavalry legs to rearward, shouted; and Mr. Sumner, a rising young barrister, walking beside Cornelia, smiled a smile of extreme rigidity. Arabella was punished for claiming rights of birth. She heard the murmuring course of the dialogue between Cornelia and Mr. Sumner, sufficiently clear to tell her it was not fictitious and was well sustained, while her heart was kept thirsting for the key to it. In advance were Adela and Edward Buxley, who was only a rich alderman's

only son, but had the virtue of an extraordinary power of drawing caricatures, and was therefore useful in exaggerating the features of disagreeable people, and showing how odious they were: besides endearing pleasant ones by exhibiting how comic they could be. Gossips averred that before Mr. Pole had been worried by his daughters into giving that mighty sum for Brookfield, Arabella had accepted Edward as her suitor; but for some reason or other he had apparently fallen from his high estate. To tell the truth, Arabella conceived that he had simply obeyed her wishes, while he knew he was naughtily following his own; and Adela, without introspection at all, was making her virgin effort at the caricaturing of our sex in his person: an art for which she promised well.

Out of the long black shadows of the solitary trees of the park, and through low yellow moonlight, they passed suddenly into the muffled ways of the wood. Mr. Pericles was ineffably provoking. He had come for gallantry's sake, and was not to be rallied, and would echo every question in a roar, and there was no drawing of the man out at all. He knocked against branches, and tripped over stumps, and ejaculated with energy; but though he gave no heed or help to his fair associate, she thought not the worse of him, so heroic can women be toward any creature that will permit himself to be clothed by a mystery. At times the party hung still, fancying the voice aloft, and then, after listening to the unrelieved stillness, they laughed, and trod the stiff dry ferns and soft mosses once more. At last they came to a decided halt, when the proposition to return caused Adela to come up to Mr. Pericles and say to him, 'Now, you must confess! You have prohibited her from singing to-night so that we may continue to be mystified. I call this quite shameful of you!'

And even as Mr. Pericles was protesting that he was the most mystified of the company, his neck lengthened, and his head went round, and his ear was turned to the sky, while he breathed an elaborate 'Ah!' And sure enough that was the voice of the woods, cleaving the night air, not distant. A sleepy fire of early moonlight hung through the dusky fir-branches. The voice had the woods to itself, and seemed to fill them and soar over them, it was so full and rich, so light and sweet. And now, to add to the marvel, they heard a harp accompaniment, the strings being faintly touched, but with firm fingers. A woman's voice: on that could be no dispute. Tell me, what opens heaven more flamingly to heart and mind, than the voice of a woman, pouring clear accordant notes to the blue night sky, that grows light blue to the moon? There was no flourish in her singing. All the notes were firm, and rounded, and sovereignly distinct. She seemed to have caught the ear of Night, and sang confident of her charm. It was a grand old Italian air, requiring severity of tone and power. Now into great mournful hollows the voice sank steadfastly. One soft sweep of the strings succeeded a deep final note, and the hearers breathed freely.

'Stradella!' said the Greek, folding his arms.

The ladies were too deeply impressed to pursue their play with him. Real emotions at once set aside the semi-credence they had given to their own suggestions.

'Hush! she will sing again,' whispered Adela. 'It is the most delicious contralto.' Murmurs of objection to the voice being characterized at all by any technical word, or even for a human quality, were heard.

'Let me find zis woman!' cried the prose enthusiast Mr. Pericles, imperiously, with his bearskin thrown back on his shoulders, and forth they stepped, following him.

In the middle of the wood there was a sandy mound,

rising half the height of the lesser firs, bounded by a green-grown vallum, where once an old woman, hopelessly a witch, had squatted, and defied the authorities to make her budge: nor could they accomplish the task before her witch-soul had taken wing in the form of a black night-bird, often to be heard jarring above the spot. Lank dry weeds and nettles, and great lumps of green and gray moss, now stood on the poor old creature's place of habitation, and the moon, slanting through the fir-clumps, was scattered on the blossoms of twisted orchard-trees, gone wild again. Amid this desolation, a dwarfed pine, whose roots were partially bared as they grasped the broken bank that was its perch, threw far out a cedar-like hand. In the shadow of it sat the fair singer. A musing touch of her harp-strings drew the intruders to the charmed circle, though they could discern nothing save the glimmer of the instrument and one set of fingers caressing it. How she viewed their rather impertinent advance toward her, till they had ranged in a half-circle nearer and nearer, could not be guessed. She did not seem abashed in any way, for, having preluded, she threw herself into another song.

The charm was now more human, though scarcely less powerful. This was a different song from the last: it was not the sculptured music of the old school, but had the richness and fulness of passionate blood that marks the modern Italian, where there is much dallying with beauty in the thick of sweet anguish. Here, at a certain passage of the song, she gathered herself up and pitched a nervous note, so shrewdly triumphing, that, as her voice sank to rest, her hearers could not restrain a deep murmur of admiration.

Then came an awkward moment. The ladies did not wish to go, and they were not justified in stopping. They were anxious to speak, and they could not choose the

word to utter. Mr. Pericles relieved them by moving forward and doffing his hat, at the same time begging excuse for the rudeness they were guilty of.

The fair singer answered, with the quickness that showed a girl: 'Oh, stay; do stay, if I please you!' A singular form of speech, it was thought by the ladies.

She added: 'I feel that I sing better when I have people to listen to me.'

'You find it more sympathetic, do you not?' remarked Cornelia.

'I don't know,' responded the unknown, with a very honest smile. 'I like it.'

She was evidently uneducated. 'A professional?' whispered Adela to Arabella. She wanted little invitation to exhibit her skill, at all events, for, at a word, the clear, bold, but finely nervous voice, was pealing to a brisker measure, that would have been joyous but for one fall it had, coming unexpectedly, without harshness, and winding up the song in a ringing melancholy.

After a few bars had been sung, Mr. Pericles was seen tapping his forehead perplexedly. The moment it ended, he cried out, in a tone of vexed apology for strange ignorance: 'But I know not it? It is Italian—yes, I swear it is Italian! But—who then? It is superbe! But I know not it!'

'It is mine,' said the young person.

'Your music, miss?'

'I mean, I composed it.'

'Permit me to say, Brava!'

The ladies instantly petitioned to have it sung to them again; and whether or not they thought more of it, or less, now that the authorship was known to them, they were louder in their applause, which seemed to make the little person very happy.

'You are sure it pleases you?' she exclaimed.

They were very sure it pleased them. Somehow the ladies were growing gracious toward her, from having previously felt too humble, it may be. She was girlish in her manner, and not imposing in her figure. She would be a sweet mystery to talk about, they thought: but she had ceased to be quite the same mystery to them.

'I would go on singing to you,' she said; 'I could sing all night long: but my people at the farm will not keep supper for me, when it 's late, and I shall have to go hungry to bed, if I wait.'

'Have you far to go?' ventured Adela.

'Only to Wilson's farm; about ten minutes' walk through the wood,' she answered unhesitatingly.

Arabella wished to know whether she came frequently to this lovely spot.

'When it does not rain, every evening,' was the reply.

'You feel that the place inspires you?' said Cornelia.

'I am obliged to come,' she explained. 'The good old dame at the farm is ill, and she says that music all day is enough for her, and I must come here, or I should get no chance of playing at all at night.'

'But surely you feel an inspiration in the place, do you not?' Cornelia persisted.

She looked at this lady as if she had got a hard word given her to crack, and muttered: 'I feel it quite warm here. And I do begin to love the place.'

The stately Cornelia fell back a step.

The moon was now a silver ball on the edge of the circle of grey blue above the ring of firs, and by the light falling on the strange little person, as she stood out of the shadow to muffle up her harp, it could be seen that she was simply clad, and that her bonnet was not of the newest fashion. The sisters remarked a boot-lace hanging loose. The peculiar black lustre of her hair, and thickness of her long black eyebrows, struck them likewise. Her harp being

now comfortably mantled, Cornet Wilfrid Pole, who had been watching her and balancing repeatedly on his forward foot, made a stride, and 'really could not allow her to carry it herself,' and begged her permission that he might assist her. 'It 's very heavy, you know,' he added.

'Too heavy for me,' she said, favouring him with a thankful smile. 'I have some one who does that. Where is Jim?'

She called for Jim, and from the back of the sandy hillock, where he had been reclining, a broad-shouldered rustic came lurching round to them.

'Now, take my harp, if you please, and be as careful as possible of branches, and don't stumble.' She uttered this as if she were giving Jim his evening lesson: and then with a sudden cry she laughed out: 'Oh! but I haven't played you your tune, and you must have your tune!'

Forthwith she stript the harp half bare, and throwing a propitiatory bright glance at her audience on the other side of her, she commenced thrumming a kind of Giles Scroggins, native British, beer-begotten air, while Jim smeared his mouth and grinned, as one who sees his love dragged into public view, and is not the man to be ashamed of her, though he hopes you will hardly put him to the trial.

'This is his favourite tune, that *he* taught *me*,' she emphasized to the company. 'I play to him every night, for a finish; and then he takes care not to knock my poor harp to pieces and tumble about.'

The gentlemen were amused by the Giles Scroggins air, which she had delivered with a sufficient sense of its lumping fun and leg-for-leg jollity, and they laughed and applauded; but the ladies were silent after the performance, until the moment came to thank her for the entertainment she had afforded them: and then they broke

into gentle smiles, and trusted they might have the pleasure of hearing her another night.

'Oh! just as often and as much as you like,' she said, and first held her hand to Arabella, next to Cornelia, and then to Adela. She seemed to be hesitating before the gentlemen, and when Wilfrid raised his hat, she was put to some confusion, and bowed rather awkwardly, and retired.

'Good night, miss!' called Mr. Pericles.

'Good night, sir!' she answered from a little distance, and they could see that she was there emboldened to drop a proper curtsey in accompaniment.

Then the ladies stood together and talked of her, not with absolute enthusiasm. For, 'Was it not divine?' said Adela; and Cornelia asked her if she meant the last piece; and, 'Oh, gracious! not that!' Adela exclaimed. And then it was discovered how their common observation had fastened on the boot-lace; and this vagrant article became the key to certain speculations on her condition and character.

'I wish I 'd had a dozen bouquets, that 's all!' cried Wilfrid. 'She deserved them.'

'Has she sentiment for what she sings? or is it only faculty?' Cornelia put it to Mr. Sumner.

That gentleman faintly defended the stranger for the intrusion of the bumpkin tune. 'She did it so well!' he said.

'I complain that she did it *too* well,' uttered Cornelia, whose use of emphasis customarily implied that the argument remained with her.

Talking in this manner, and leisurely marching homeward, they were startled to hear Mr. Pericles, who had wrapped himself impenetrably in the bear, burst from his cogitation suddenly to cry out, in his harshest foreign accent: 'Yeaz!' And thereupon he threw open the

folds, and laid out a forefinger, and delivered himself: 'I am made my mind! I send her abroad to ze Académie for one, two, tree year. She shall be instructed as was not before. Zen a noise at La Scala. No—Paris! No—London! She shall astonish London fairst.—Yez! if I take a theatre! Yez! if I buy a newspaper! Yez! if I pay feefty-sossand pound!'

His singular outlandish vehemence, and the sweeping grandeur of a determination that lightly assumed the corruptibility of our Press, sent a smile circling among the ladies and gentlemen. The youth who had wished to throw the fair unknown a dozen bouquets, caught himself frowning at this brilliant prospect for her, which was to give him his opportunity.

CHAPTER III

WILFRID'S DIPLOMACY

THE next morning there were many 'tra-las' and 'tum-te-tums' over the family breakfast-table; a constant humming and crying, 'I have it'; and after two or three bars, baffled pauses and confusion of mind. Mr. Pericles was almost abusive at the impotent efforts of the sisters to revive in his memory that particular delicious melody, the composition of the fair singer herself. At last he grew so impatient as to arrest their opening notes, and even to interrupt their unmusical consultations, with: 'No: it is no use; it is no use: no, no, I say!' But instantly he would plunge his forehead into the palm of his hand, and rub it red, and work his eyebrows frightfully, until tender humanity led the sisters to resume. Adela's: 'I 'm sure it began low down—tum!' Cornelia's: 'The

key-note, I am positive, was B flat—ta!' and Arabella's putting of these two assertions together, and promise to combine them at the piano when breakfast was at an end, *though* it was Sunday morning, were exasperating to the exquisite lover of music. Mr. Pericles was really suffering torments. Do you know what it is to pursue the sylph, and touch her flying skirts, think you have caught her, and are sure of her—that she is yours, the rapturous evanescent darling! when some well-meaning earthly wretch interposes and trips you, and off she flies and leaves you floundering? A lovely melody nearly grasped and lost in this fashion, tries the temper. Apollo chasing Daphne could have been barely polite to the wood-nymphs in his path, and Mr. Pericles was rude to the daughters of his host. Smoothing his clean square chin and thick moustache hastily, with outspread thumb and fingers, he implored them to spare his nerves. Smiling rigidly, he trusted they would be merciful to a sensitive ear. Mr. Pole—who, as an Englishman, could not understand any one being so serious in the pursuit of a tune—laughed, and asked questions, and almost drove Mr. Pericles mad. On a sudden the Greek's sallow visage lightened. 'It is to you! it is to you!' he cried, stretching his finger at Wilfrid. The young officer, having apparently waited till he had finished with his knife and fork, was leaning his cheek on his fist, looking at nobody, and quietly humming a part of the air. Mr. Pericles complimented and thanked him.

'But you have ear for music extraordinaire!' he said.

Adela patted her brother fondly, remarking—'Yes, when his feelings are concerned.'

'Will you repeat zat?' asked the Greek. '"To-to-ri": hein? I lose it. "To-to-ru": bah! I lose it; "To-ri:—to-ru- -ri- -ro": it is no use: I lose it.'

Neither his persuasions, nor his sneer, 'Because it is

Sunday, pèrhaps!' would induce Wilfrid to be guilty of another attempt. The ladies tried sisterly cajoleries on him fruitlessly, until Mr. Pole, seeing the desperation of his guest, said: 'Why not have her up here, toon and all, some week-day? Sunday birds won't suit us, you know. We 've got a piano for her that 's good enough for the first of 'em, if money means anything.'

The ladies murmured meekly: 'Yes, papa.'

'I shall find her for you while you go to your chärch,' said Mr. Pericles. And here Wilfrid was seized with a yawn, and rose, and asked his eldest sister if she meant to attend the service that morning.

'Undoubtedly,' she answered; and Mr. Pole took it up: 'That 's our discipline, my boy. Must set an example: do our duty. All the house goes to worship in the country.'

'Why, in ze country?' queried Mr. Pericles.

'Because'—Cornelia came to the rescue of her sire; but her impetuosity was either unsupported by a reason, or she stooped to fit one to the comprehension of the interrogator: 'Oh, because—do you know, we have very select music at our church?'

'We have a highly-paid organist,' added Arabella.

'Recently elected,' said Adela.

'Ah! mon Dieu!' Mr. Pericles ejaculated. 'Some music sound well at afar—mellow, you say. I prefer your chärch music mellow.'

'Won't you come?' cried Wilfrid, with wonderful briskness.

'No. Mellow for me!'

The Greek's grińders flashed, and Wilfrid turned off from him sulkily. He saw in fancy the robber-Greek prowling about Wilson's farm, setting snares for the marvellous night-bird, and it was with more than his customary inattention to his sisters' refined conversation

that he formed part of their male escort to the place of worship.

Mr. Pericles met the church-goers on their return in one of the green bowery lanes leading up to Brookfield. Cold as he was to English scenes and sentiments, his alien ideas were not unimpressed by the picture of those daintily-clad young women demurely stepping homeward, while the air held a revel of skylarks, and the scented hedgeways quickened with sunshine.

'You *have* missed a treat!' Arabella greeted him.

'A sèrmon?' said he.

The ladies would not tell him, until his complacent cynicism at the notion of his having missed a sermon, spurred them to reveal that the organ had been handled in a masterly manner; and that the voluntary played at the close of the service was most exquisite.

'Even papa was in raptures.'

'Very good indeed,' said Mr. Pole. 'I'm no judge; but you might listen to that sort of playing after dinner.'

Mr. Pericles seemed to think that was scarcely a critical period, but he merely grimaced, and inquired: 'Did you see ze player?'

'Oh, no: they are hidden,' Arabella explained to him, 'behind a curtain.'

'But, what!' shouted the impetuous Greek: 'have you no curiosity? A woman! And zen, you saw not her?'

'No,' remarked Cornelia, in the same aggravating sing-song voice of utter indifference: 'we don't know whether it was not a man. Our usual organist is a man, I believe.'

The eyes of the Greek whitened savagely, and he relapsed into frigid politeness.

Wilfrid was not present to point their apprehensions.

He had loitered behind; but when he joined them in the house subsequently, he was cheerful, and had a look of triumph about him which made his sisters say, 'So, you have been with the Copleys': and he allowed them to suppose it, if they pleased; the Copleys being young ladies of position in the neighbourhood, of much higher standing than the Tinleys, who, though very wealthy, could not have given their brother such an air, the sisters imagined.

At lunch, Wilfrid remarked carelessly: 'By the way, I met that little girl we saw last night.'

'The singer! where?' asked his sisters, with one voice.

'Coming out of church.'

'She goes to church, then!'

This exclamation showed the heathen they took her to be.

'Why, she played the organ,' said Wilfrid.

'And how does she look by day? How *does* she dress?'

'Oh! very jolly little woman! Dresses quiet enough.'

'She played the organ! It was she, then! An organist! Is there anything approaching to gentility in her appearance?'

'I—really I 'm no judge,' said Wilfrid. 'You had better ask Laura Tinley. She was talking to her when I went up.'

The sisters exchanged looks. Presently they stood together in consultation. Then they spoke with their aunt, Mrs. Lupin, and went to their papa. The rapacity of those Tinleys for anything extraordinary was known to them, but they would not have conceived that their own discovery, their own treasure, could have been caught up so quickly. If the Tinleys got possession of her, the defection of Mr. Pericles might be counted on, and the display of a phenomenon would be lost to them.

They decided to go down to Wilson's farm that very day, and forestall their rivals by having her up to Brookfield. The idea of doing this had been in a corner of their minds all the morning: it seemed now the most sensible plan in the world. It was patronage, in its right sense. And they might be of great service to her, by giving a proper elevation and tone to her genius; while she might amuse them, and their guests, and be let off, in fact, as a firework for the nonce. Among the queenly cases of women who are designing to become the heads of a circle (if I may use the term), an accurate admeasurement of reciprocal advantages can scarcely be expected to rank; but the knowledge that an act, depending upon us for execution, is capable of benefiting both sides, will make the proceeding appear so unselfish, that its wisdom is overlooked as well as its motives. The sisters felt they were the patronesses of the little obscure genius whom they longed for to illumine their household, before they knew her name. Cornet Wilfrid Pole must have chuckled mightily to see them depart on their mission. These ladies, who managed everybody, had themselves been very cleverly managed. It is doubtful whether the scheme to surprise and delight Mr. Pericles would have actuated the step they took, but for the dread of seeing the rapacious Tinleys snatch up their lawful prey. The Tinleys were known to be quite capable of doing so. They had, on a particular occasion, made transparent overtures to a celebrity belonging to the Poles, whom they had first met at Brookfield: could never have hoped to have seen had they not met him at Brookfield; and girls who behaved in this way would do anything. The resolution was taken to steal a march on them; nor did it seem at all odd to people naturally so hospitable as the denizens of Brookfield, that the stranger of yesterday should be the guest of to-day. Kindness of heart, com-

bined with a great scheme in the brain, easily put aside conventional rules.

'But we don't know her name,' they said, when they had taken the advice of the gentlemen on what they had already decided to do: all excepting Mr. Pericles, for whom the surprise was in store.

'Belloni—Miss Belloni,' said Wilfrid.

'Are you sure? How do you know?——'

'She told Laura Tinley.'

Within five minutes of the receipt of this intelligence the ladies were on their way to Wilson's farm.

CHAPTER IV

EMILIA'S FIRST TRIAL IN PUBLIC

The circle which the ladies of Brookfield were designing to establish just now, was of this receipt:—Celebrities, London residents, and County notables, all in their severally due proportions, were to meet, mix, and revolve: the Celebrities to shine; the Metropolitans to act as satellites; the County ignoramuses to feel flattered in knowing that all stood forth for their amusement: they being the butts of the quick-witted Metropolitans, whom they despised, while the sons of renown were encouraged to be conscious of their magnanimous superiority over both sets, for whose entertainment they were ticketed.

This is a pudding indeed! And the contemplation of the skill and energy required to get together and compound such a Brookfield Pudding, well-nigh leads one to think the work that is done out of doors a very inferior business, and, as it were, mere gathering of fuel for the fire inside. It was known in the neighbourhood that the ladies were

preparing one; and moreover that they had a new kind of plum; in other words, that they intended to exhibit a prodigy of genius, who would flow upon the world from Brookfield. To announce her with the invitations, rejecting the idea of a surprise in the assembly, had been necessary, because there was no other way of securing Lady Gosstre, who led the society of the district. The great lady gave her promise to attend: 'though,' as she said to Arabella, 'you must know I abominate musical parties, and think them the most absurd of entertainments possible; but if you have anything to show, that 's another matter.'

Two or three chosen friends were invited down beforehand to inspect the strange girl, and say what they thought of her; for the ladies themselves were perplexed. They had found her to be commonplace: a creature without ideas and with a decided appetite. So when Tracy Runningbrook, who had also been a plum in his day, and was still a poet, said that she was exquisitely comic, they were induced to take the humorous view of the inexplicable side in the character of Miss Belloni, and tried to laugh at her eccentricities. Seeing that Mr. Pericles approved of her voice as a singer, and Tracy Runningbrook let pass her behaviour as a girl, they conceived that on the whole they were safe in sounding a trumpet loudly. These gentlemen were connoisseurs, each in his walk.

Concerning her position and parentage, nothing was known. She had met Adela's delicately-searching touches in that direction with a marked reserve. It was impossible to ask her point-blank, after probing her with a dozen suggestions, for the ingenuousness of an indifferent inquiry could not then be assumed, so that Adela was constantly baffled and felt that she must some day be excessively 'fond with her,' which was annoying. The girl lit up at any sign of affection. A kind look gave

Summer depths to her dark eyes. Otherwise she maintained a simple discretion and walked in her own path, content to look quietly pleased on everybody, as one who had plenty to think of and a voice in her ear.

Apparently she was not to be taught to understand 'limits': which must be explained as a sort of magnetic submissiveness to the variations of Polar caprice; so that she should move about with ease, be cheerful, friendly, and, at a signal, affectionate; still not failing to recognize the particular nooks where the family chalk had traced a line. As the day of exhibition approached, Adela thought she would give her a lesson in limits. She ventured to bestow a small caress on the girl, after a compliment; thinking that the compliment would be a check: but the compliment was passed, and the caress instantly replied to with two arms and a tender mouth. At which, Adela took fright and was glad to slip away.

At last the pudding flowed into the bag.

Emilia was posted by the ladies in a corner of the room. Receiving her assurance that she was not hungry, they felt satisfied that she wanted nothing. Wilfrid came up to her to console her for her loneliness, until Mr. Pericles had stationed himself at the back of her chair, and then Wilfrid nodded languidly and attended to his graver duties. Who would have imagined that she had hurt him? But she certainly looked with greater animation on Mr. Pericles; and when Tracy Runningbrook sat down by her, a perfect little carol of chatter sprang up between them. These two presented such a noticeable contrast, side by side, that the ladies had to send a message to separate them. She was perhaps a little the taller of the two; with smoothed hair that had the gloss of black briony leaves, and eyes like burning brands in a cave; while Tracy's hair was red as blown flame, with eyes of a grey-green hue, that may be seen glistening over wet

sunset. People, who knew him, asked: 'Who is *she*?' and it was not in the design of the ladies to have her noted just yet.

Lady Gosstre's exclamation on entering the room was presently heard. 'Well! and where 's our extraordinary genius? Pray, let me see her immediately.'

Thereat Laura Tinley, with gross ill-breeding, rushed up to Arabella, who was receiving her ladyship, and touching her arm, as if privileges were permitted her, cried: 'I 'm dying to see her. Has she come?'

Arabella embraced the offensive girl in a hostess's smile, and talked flowingly to the great lady.

Laura Tinley was punished by being requested to lead off with a favourite song in a buzz. She acceded, quite aware of the honour intended, and sat at the piano, taming as much as possible her pantomime of one that would be audible. Lady Gosstre scanned the room, while Adela, following her ladyship's eyeglass, named the guests.

'You get together a quaint set of men,' said Lady Gosstre.

'Women!' was on Adela's tongue's tip. She had really thought well of her men. Her heart sank.

'In the country!' she began.

'Yes, yes!' went my lady.

These were the lessons that made the ladies of Brookfield put a check upon youth's tendency to feel delightful satisfaction with its immediate work, and speedily conceive a discontented suspicion of anything whatsoever that served them.

Two other sacrifices were offered at the piano after Laura Tinley. Poor victims of ambition, they arranged their dresses, smiled at the leaves, and deliberately gave utterance to the dreadful nonsense of the laureates of our drawing-rooms. Mr. Pericles and Emilia exchanged

scientific glances during the performance. She was merciless to indifferent music. Wilfrid saw the glances pass. So, now, when Emilia was beckoned to the piano, she passed by Wilfrid, and had a cold look in return for beaming eyes.

According to directions, Emilia sang a simple Neapolitan air. The singer was unknown, and was generally taken for another sacrifice.

'Come; that 's rather pretty,' Lady Gosstre hailed the close.

'It is of ze people—such as zat,' assented Mr. Pericles.

Adela heard my lady ask for the singer's name. She made her way to her sisters. Adela was ordinarily the promoter, Cornelia the sifter, and Arabella the director, of schemes in this management. The ladies had a moment for counsel over a music-book, for Arabella was about to do duty at the piano. During a pause, Mr. Pole lifting his white waistcoat with the effort, sent a word abroad, loudly and heartily, regardless of its guardian aspirate, like a bold-faced hoyden flying from her chaperon. They had dreaded it. They loved their father, but declined to think his grammar parental. Hushing together, they agreed that it had been a false move to invite Lady Gosstre, who did not care a bit for music, until the success of their Genius was assured by persons who did. To suppose that she would recognize a Genius, failing a special introduction, was absurd. The ladies could turn upon aristocracy too, when it suited them.

Arabella had now to go through a quartett. The fever of ill-luck had seized the violin. He would not tune. Then his string broke; and while he was arranging it the footman came up to Arabella. Misfortunes, we know, are the most united family on earth. The news brought

to her was that a lady of the name of Mrs. Chump was below. Holding her features rigidly bound, not to betray perturbation, Arabella confided the fact to Cornelia, who, with a similar mental and muscular compression, said instantly, 'Manœuvre her.' Adela remarked, 'If you tell her the company is grand, she *will* come, and her Irish once heard here will destroy us. The very name of Chump!'

Mrs. Chump was the wealthy Irish widow of an alderman, whose unaccountable bad taste in going to Ireland for a wife, yet filled the ladies with astonishment. She pretended to be in difficulties with her lawyers; for which reason she strove to be perpetually in consultation with her old flame and present trustee Mr. Pole. The ladies had fought against her in London, and since their installation at Brookfield they had announced to their father that she was not to be endured there. Mr. Pole had plaintively attempted to dilate on the virtues of Martha Chump. 'In her place,' said the ladies, and illustrated to him that amid a nosegay of flowers there was no fit room for an exuberant vegetable. The old man had sighed and seemed to surrender. One thing was certain: Mrs. Chump had never been seen at Brookfield. 'She never shall be, save by the servants,' said the ladies.

Emilia, not unmarked of Mr. Pericles, had gone over to Wilfrid once or twice, to ask him if haply he disapproved of anything she had done. Mr. Pericles shrugged, and went 'Ah!' as who should say, 'This must be stopped.' Adela now came to her and caught her hand, showering sweet whispers on her, and bidding her go to her harp and do her best. 'We love you; we all love you!' was her parting instigation.

The quartett was abandoned. Arabella had departed with a firm countenance to combat Mrs. Chump.

Emilia sat by her harp. The saloon was critically still; so still that Adela fancied she heard a faint Irish protest from the parlour. Wilfrid was perhaps the most critical auditor present: for he doubted whether she could renew that singular charm of her singing in the pale lighted woods. The first smooth contralto notes took him captive. He scarcely believed that this could be the raw girl whom his sisters delicately pitied.

A murmur of plaudits, the low thunder of gathering acclamation, went round. Lady Gosstre looked a satisfied, 'This will do.' Wilfrid saw Emilia's eyes appeal hopefully to Mr. Pericles. The connoisseur shrugged. A pain lodged visibly on her black eyebrows. She gripped her harp, and her eyelids appeared to quiver as she took the notes. Again, and still singing, she turned her head to him. The eyes of Mr. Pericles were white, as if upraised to intercede for her with the Powers of Harmony. Her voice grew unnerved. On a sudden she excited herself to pitch and give volume to that note which had been the enchantment of the night in the woods. It quavered. One might have thought her caught by the throat.

Emilia gazed at no one now. She rose, without a word or an apology, keeping her eyes down.

'Fiasco!' cruelly cried Mr. Pericles.

That was better to her than the silly kindness of the people who deemed it well to encourage her with applause. Emilia could not bear the clapping of hands, and fled.

CHAPTER V

EMILIA PLAYS ON THE CORNET

The night was warm under a slowly-floating moon. Full of compassion for the poor girl, who had moved him if she had failed in winning the assembly, Wilfrid stepped into the garden, where he expected to find her, and to be the first to pet and console her. Threading the scented shrubs, he came upon a turn in one of the alleys, from which point he had a view of her figure, as she stood near a Portugal laurel on the lawn. Mr. Pericles was by her side. Wilfrid's intention was to join them. A loud sob from Emilia checked his foot.

'You are cruel,' he heard her say.

'If it is good, I tell it you; if it is bad, abominable, I tell it you, juste ze same,' responded Mr. Pericles.

'The others did not think it very bad.'

'Ah! bah!' Mr. Pericles cut her short.

Had they been talking of matters secret and too sweet, Wilfrid would have retired, like a man of honour. As it was, he continued to listen. The tears of his poor little friend, moreover, seemed to hold him there in the hope that he might afford some help.

'Yes; I do not care for the others,' she resumed. 'You praised me the night I first saw you.'

'It is perhaps zat you can sing to z' moon,' returned Mr. Pericles. 'But, what! a singer, she must sing in a house. To-night it is warm, to-morrow it is cold. If you sing through a cold, what noise do we hear? It is a nose, not a voice. It is a trompet.'

Emilia, with a whimpering firmness, replied: 'You said I am lazy. I am not.'

'Not lazy,' Mr. Pericles assented.

'Do I care for praise from people who do not understand music? It is not true. I only like to please them.'

'Be a street-organ,' Mr. Pericles retorted.

'I must like to see them pleased when I sing,' said Emilia desperately.

'And you like ze clap of ze hands. Yez. It is quite natural. Yess. You are a good child, it is clear. But, look. You are a voice uncultivated, sauvage. You go wrong: I hear you: and dese claps of zese noodels send you into squeaks and shrills, and false! false! away you go. It is a gallop ze wrong way.'

Here Mr. Pericles attempted the most horrible reproduction of Emilia's failure. She cried out as if she had been bitten.

'What am I to do?' she asked sadly.

'Not now,' Mr. Pericles answered. 'You live in London?—at where?'

'Must I tell you?'

'Certainly, you must tell me.'

'But, I am not going there; I mean, not yet.'

'You are going to sing to z' moon through z' nose. Yez. For how long?'

'These ladies have asked me to stay with them. They make me so happy. When I leave them—then!'

Emilia sighed.

'And zen?' quoth Mr. Pericles.

'Then, while my money lasts, I shall stay in the country.'

'How much money?'

'How much money have I?' Emilia frankly and accurately summed up the condition of her treasury. 'Four pounds and nineteen shillings.'

'Hom! it is spent, and you go to your father again?'

'Yes.'

'To ze old Belloni?'

'My father.'

'No!' cried Mr. Pericles, upon Emilia's melancholy utterance. He bent to her ear and rapidly spoke, in an undertone, what seemed to be a vivid sketch of a new course of fortune for her. Emilia gave one joyful outcry; and now Wilfrid retreated, questioning within himself whether he should have remained so long. But, as he argued, if he was convinced that the rascally Greek fellow meant mischief to her, was he not bound to employ every stratagem to be her safeguard? The influence of Mr. Pericles already exercised over her was immense and mysterious. Within ten minutes she was singing triumphantly indoors. Wilfrid could hear that her voice was firm and assured. She was singing the song of the woods. He found to his surprise that his heart dropped under some burden, as if he had no longer force to sustain it.

By-and-by some of the members of the company issued forth. Carriages were heard on the gravel, and young men in couples, preparing to light the ensign of happy release from the ladies (or of indemnification for their absence, if you please), strolled about the grounds.

'Did you see that little passage between Laura Tinley and Bella Pole?' said one, and forthwith mimicked them: 'Laura commencing:—"We *must* have her over to us."—"I fear we have pre-engaged her."—"Oh, but you, dear, will do us the favour to come, too?"—"I fear, dear, our immediate engagements will preclude the possibility."—"Surely, dear Miss Pole, we may hope that you have not abandoned us?"—"That, my dear Miss Tinley, is out of the question."—"May we not name a day?"—"If it depends upon us, frankly, we cannot bid you do so."'

The other joined him in laughter, adding: '"Frankly"'s capital! What absurd creatures women are! How the deuce did you manage to remember it all?'

'My sister was at my elbow. She repeated it, word for word.'

''Pon my honour, women are wonderful creatures!'

The two young men continued their remarks, with a sense of perfect consistency.

Lady Gosstre, as she was being conducted to her carriage, had pronounced aloud that Emilia was decidedly worth hearing.

'She 's better worth knowing,' said Tracy Runningbrook. 'I see you are all bent on spoiling her. If you were to sit and talk with her, you would perceive that she 's meant for more than to make a machine of her throat. What a throat it is! She has the most comical notion of things. I fancy I 'm looking at the budding of my own brain. She 's a born artist, but I 'm afraid everybody 's conspiring to ruin her.'

'Surely,' said Adela, 'we shall not do that, if we encourage her in her Art.'

'He means another kind of art,' said Lady Gosstre. 'The term "artist," applied to our sex, signifies "Frenchwoman" with him. He does not allow us to be anything but women. As artists then we are largely privileged, I assure you.'

'Are we placed under a professor to learn the art?' Adela inquired, pleased with the subject under such high patronage.

'Each new experience is your accomplished professor,' said Tracy. 'One can't call Cleopatra a professor: she 's but an illustrious example.'

'Imp! you are corrupt.' With which my lady tapped farewell on his shoulder. Leaning from the carriage-window, she said: 'I suppose I shall see you at Richford?

Merthyr Powys is coming this week. And that reminds me: he would be the man to appreciate your "born artist." Bring her to me. We will have a dinner. I will despatch a formal invitation to-morrow. The season 's bad out of town for getting decent people to meet you. I will do my best.'

She bowed to Adela and Tracy. Mr. Pole, who had hovered around the unfamiliar dialogue to attend the great lady to the door, here came in for a recognition, and bowed obsequiously to the back of the carriage.

Arabella did not tell her sisters what weapons she had employed to effect the rout of Mrs. Chump. She gravely remarked that the woman had consented to go, and her sisters thanked her. They were mystified by Laura's non-recognition of Emilia, and only suspected Wilfrid so faintly that they were able to think they did not suspect him at all. On the whole, the evening had been a success. It justified the ladies in repeating a well-known Brookfield phrase: 'We may be wrong in many things, but never in our judgement of the merits of any given person.' In the case of Tracy Runningbrook, they had furnished a signal instance of their discernment. Him they had met at the house of a friend of the Tinleys (a Colonel's wife distantly connected with great houses). The Tinleys laughed at his flaming head and him, but the ladies of Brookfield had ears and eyes for a certain tone and style about him, before they learnt that he was of the blood of dukes, and would be a famous poet. When this was mentioned, after his departure, they had made him theirs, and the Tinleys had no chance. Through Tracy, they achieved their introduction to Lady Gosstre. And now they were to dine with her. They did not say that this was through Emilia. In fact, they felt a little that they had this evening been a sort of background to their prodigy: which was not

in the design. Having observed, 'She sang deliciously,' they dismissed her, and referred to dresses, gaucheries of members of the company, pretensions here and there, Lady Gosstre's walk, the way to shuffle men and women, how to start themes for them to converse upon, and so forth. Not Juno and her Court surveying our mortal requirements in divine independence of fatigue, could have been more considerate for the shortcomings of humanity. And while they were legislating this and that for others, they still accepted hints for their own improvement, as those who have Perfection in view may do. Lady Gosstre's carriage of her shoulders, and general manner, were admitted to be worthy of study.—'And did you notice when Laura Tinley interrupted her conversation with Tracy Runningbrook, how quietly she replied to the fact and nothing else, so that Laura had not another word?'—'And did you observe her deference to papa, as host?'—'And did you not see, on more than one occasion, with what consummate ease she would turn a current of dialogue when it had gone far enough?' They had all noticed, seen, and observed. They agreed that there was a quality beyond art, beyond genius, beyond any special cleverness; and that was, the great social quality of taking, as by nature, without assumption, a queenly position in a circle, and making harmony of all the instruments to be found in it. High praise of Lady Gosstre ensued. The ladies of Brookfield allowed themselves to bow to her with the greater humility, owing to the secret sense they nursed of overtopping her still in that ineffable Something which they alone possessed: a casket little people will be wise in not hurrying our Father Time to open for them, if they would continue to enjoy the jewel they suppose it to contain. Finally, these energetic young ladies said their prayers by the morning twitter of the birds, and went to their

beds, less from a desire for rest than because custom demanded it.

Three days later Emilia was a resident in the house, receiving lessons in demeanour from Cornelia, and in horsemanship from Wilfrid. She expressed no gratitude for kindnesses or wonder at the change in her fortune, save that pleasure sat like an inextinguishable light on her face. A splendid new harp arrived one day, ticketed, 'For Miss Emilia Belloni.'

'He does not know I have a second Christian name,' was her first remark, after an examination of the instrument.

'"He"?' quoth Adela. 'May it not have been a lady's gift?'

Emilia clearly thought not.

'And to whom do you ascribe it?'

'Who sent it to me? Mr. Pericles, of course.'

She touched the strings immediately, and sighed.

'Are you discontented with the tone, child?' asked Adela.

'No. I can't guess what it cost!'

Surely the ladies had reason to think her commonplace!

She explained herself better to Wilfrid, when he returned to Brookfield after a short absence. Showing the harp, 'See what Mr. Pericles thinks me worth!' she said.

'Not more than that?' was his gallant rejoinder. 'Does it suit you?'

'Yes; in every way.'

This was all she said about it.

In the morning after breakfast, she sat at harp or piano, and then ran out to gather wild flowers and learn the names of trees and birds. On almost all occasions Wilfrid was her companion. He laughed at the little

sisterly revelations the ladies confided concerning her too heartily for them to have any fear that she was other than a toy to him. Few women are aware with how much ease sentimental men can laugh outwardly at what is internal torment. They had apprised him of their wish to know what her origin was, and of her peculiar reserve on that topic: whereat he assured them that she would have no secrets from him. His conduct of affairs was so open that none could have supposed the gallant cornet entangled in a maze of sentiment. For, veritably, this girl was the last sort of girl to please his fancy; and he saw not a little of fair ladies: by virtue of his heroic antecedents, he was himself well seen of them. The gallant cornet adored delicacy and a gilded refinement. The female flower could not be too exquisitely cultivated to satisfy him. And here he was, running after a little unformed girl, who had no care to conceal the fact that she was an animal, nor any notion of the necessity for doing so! He had good reason to laugh when his sisters talked of her. It was not a pleasant note which came from the gallant cornet then. But, in the meadows, or kindly conducting Emilia's horse, he yielded pretty music. Emilia wore Arabella's riding-habit, Adela's hat, and Cornelia's gloves. Politic as the ladies of Brookfield were, they were full of natural kindness; and Wilfrid, albeit a diplomatist, was not yet mature enough to control and guide a very sentimental heart. There was an element of dim imagination in all the family: and it was this that consciously elevated them over the world in prospect, and made them unconsciously subject to what I must call the spell of the poetic power.

Wilfrid in his soul wished that Emilia should date from the day she had entered Brookfield. But at times it seemed to him that a knowledge of her antecedents might

relieve him from his ridiculous perplexity of feeling. Besides though her voice struck emotion, she herself was unimpressionable. 'Cold by nature,' he said, looking at the unkindled fire. She shook hands like a boy. If her fingers were touched and retained, they continued to be fingers for as long as you pleased. Murmurs and whispers passed by her like the breeze. She appeared also to have no enthusiasm for her Art, so that not even there could Wilfrid find common ground. Italy, however, he discovered to be the subject that made her light up. Of Italy he would speak frequently, and with much simulated fervour.

'Mr. Pericles is going to take me there,' said Emilia. 'He told me to keep it secret. I have no secrets from my friends. I am to learn in the academy at Milan.'

'Would you not rather let me take you?'

'Not quite.' She shook her head. 'No; because you do not understand music as he does. And are you as rich? I cost a great deal of money even for eating alone. But you will be glad when you hear me when I come back. Do you hear that nightingale? It must be a nightingale.'

She listened. 'What things he makes us feel!'

Bending her head, she walked on silently. Wilfrid, he knew not why, had got a sudden hunger for all the days of her life. He caught her hand and, drawing her to a garden seat, said: 'Come; now tell me all about yourself before I knew you. Do you mind?'

'I 'll tell you anything you want to hear,' said Emilia.

He enjoined her to begin from the beginning.

'Everything about myself?' she asked.

'Everything. I have your permission to smoke?'

Emilia smiled. 'I wish I had some Italian cigars to give you. My father sometimes has plenty given to him.'

Wilfrid did not contemplate his havannah with less favour.

'Now,' said Emilia, taking a last sniff of the flowers before surrendering her nostril to the invading smoke. She looked at the scene fronting her under a blue sky with slow flocks of clouds: 'How I like this!' she exclaimed. 'I almost forget that I long for Italy, here.'

Beyond a plot of flowers, a gold-green meadow dipped to a ridge of gorse bordered by dark firs and the tips of greenest larches.

CHAPTER VI

EMILIA SUPPLIES THE KEY TO HERSELF AND CONTINUES HER PERFORMANCE ON THE CORNET

'My father is one of the most wonderful men in the whole world!'

Wilfrid lifted an eyelid.

'He is one of the first-violins at the Italian Opera!'

The gallant cornet's critical appreciation of this impressive announcement was expressed in a spiral ebullition of smoke from his mouth.

'He is such a proud man! And I don't wonder at that: he has reason to be proud.'

Again Wilfrid lifted an eyelid, and there is no knowing but that ideas of a connection with foreign Counts, Cardinals, and Princes passed hopefully through him.

'Would you believe that he is really the own nephew of Andronizetti!'

'Deuce he is!' said Wilfrid, in a mist. 'Which one?'

'The composer!'

Wilfrid emitted more smoke.

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'Who composed—how I love him!—that lovely "la, la, la, la," and the "te-de, ta-da, te-dle," that pleases you, out of "*Il Maladetto*." And I am descended from him! Let me hope I shall not be unworthy of him. You will never tell it till people think as much of me, or nearly. My father says I shall never be so great, because I am half English. It 's not my fault. My mother was English. But I feel that I am much more Italian than English. How I long for Italy—like a thing underground! My father did something against the Austrians, when he was a young man. Would not I have done it? I am sure I would—I don't know what. Whenever I think of Italy, night or day, pant-pant goes my heart. The name of Italy is my nightingale: I feel that somebody lives that I love, and is ill-treated shamefully, crying out to me for help. My father had to run away to save his life. He was fifteen days lying in the rice-fields to escape from the soldiers—which makes me hate a white coat. There was my father; and at night he used to steal out to one of the villages, where was a good, true woman—so they are, most, in Italy! She gave him food; maize-bread and wine, sometimes meat; sometimes a bottle of good wine. When my father thinks of it he cries, if there is gin smelling near him. At last my father had to stop there day and night. Then that good woman's daughter came to him to keep him from starving; she risked being stripped naked and beaten with rods, to keep my father from starving. When my father speaks of Sandra now, it makes my mother—she does not like it. I am named after her: Emilia Alessandra Belloni. "Sandra" is short for it. She did not know why I was christened that, and will never call me anything but Emilia, though my father says Sandra, always. My father never speaks of that dear Sandra herself, except when he is tipsy. Once I used to wish him to be tipsy;

for then I used to sit at my piano while he talked, and I made all his words go into music. One night I did it so well, my father jumped right up from his chair, shouting "Italia!" and he caught his wig off his head, and threw it into the fire, and rushed out into the street quite bald, and people thought him mad.

'It was the beginning of all our misfortunes! My father was taken and locked up in a place as a tipsy man. That he has never forgiven the English for! It has made me and my mother miserable ever since. My mother is sure it is all since that night. Do you know, I remember, though I was so young, that I felt the music —oh! like a devil in my bosom? Perhaps it was, and it passed out of me into him. Do you think it was?'

Wilfrid answered: 'Well, no! I shouldn't think you had anything to do with the devil.' Indeed, he was beginning to think her one of the smallest of frocked female essences.

'I lost my piano through it,' she went on. 'I could not practise. I was the most miserable creature in all the world till I fell in love with my harp. My father would not play to get money. He sat in his chair, and only spoke to ask about meal-time, and we had no money for food, except by selling everything we had. Then my piano went. So then I said to my mother, I will advertize to give lessons, as other people do, and make money for us all, myself. So we paid money for a brass-plate, and our landlady's kind son put it up on the door for nothing, and we waited for pupils to come. I used to pray to the Virgin that she would blessedly send me pupils, for my poor mother's complaints were so shrill and out of tune it 's impossible to tell you what I suffered. But by-and-by my father saw the brass-plate. He fell into one of his dreadful passions. We had to buy him another wig. His passions were so expensive: my

mother used to say, "There goes our poor dinner out of the window!" But, well! he went to get employment now. He can, always, when he pleases; for such a touch on the violin as my father has, you never heard. You feel yourself from top to toe, when my father plays. I feel as if I breathed music like air. One day came news from Italy, all in the newspaper, of my father's friends and old companions shot and murdered by the Austrians. He read it in the evening, after we had a quiet day. I thought he did not mind it much, for he read it out to us quite quietly; and then he made me sit on his knee and read it out. I cried with rage, and he called to me, "Sandra! Peace!" and began walking up and down the room, while my mother got the bread and cheese and spread it on the table, for we were beginning to be richer. I saw my father take out his violin. He put it on the cloth and looked at it. Then he took it up, and laid his chin on it like a man full of love, and drew the bow across just once. He whirled away the bow, and knocked down our candle, and in the darkness I heard something snap and break with a hollow sound. When I could see, he had broken it, the neck from the body—the dear old violin! I could cry still. I—I was too late to save it. I saw it broken, and the empty belly, and the loose strings! It was murdering a spirit—that was! My father sat in a corner one whole week, moping like such an old man! I was nearly dead with my mother's voice. By-and-by we were all silent, for there was nothing to eat. So I said to my mother, "I *will* earn money." My mother cried. I proposed to take a lodging for myself, all by myself; go there in the morning and return at night, and give lessons, and get money for them. My landlady's good son gave me the brass-plate again. Emilia Alessandra Belloni! I was glad to see my name. I got two pupils very quickly:

one, an old lady, and one, a young one. The old lady—I mean, she was not grey—wanted a gentleman to marry her, and the landlady told me—I mean my pupil—it makes me laugh—asked him what he thought of her voice: for I had been singing. I earned a great deal of money: two pounds ten shillings a week. I could afford to pay for lessons myself, I thought. What an expense! I had to pay ten shillings for one lesson! Some have to pay twenty; but I would pay it to learn from the best masters;—and I had to make my father and mother live on potatoes, and myself too, of course. If you buy potatoes carefully, they are extremely cheap things to live upon, and make you forget your hunger more than anything else.

'I suppose,' added Emilia, 'you have never lived upon potatoes entirely? Oh, no!'

Wilfrid gave a quiet negative.

'But I was pining to learn, and was obliged to keep them low. I could pitch any notes, and I was clear: but I was always ornamenting, and what I want is to be an accurate singer. My music-master was a German—not an Austrian—oh, no!—I 'm sure he was not. At least, I don't think so, for I liked him. He was harsh with me, but sometimes he did stretch his fingers on my head, and turn it round, and say words that I pretended not to think of, though they sent me home burning. I began to compose, and this gentleman tore up the whole sheet in a rage, when I showed it him; but he gave me a dinner, and left off charging me ten shillings—only seven, and then five—and he gave me more time than he gave others. He also did something which I don't know yet whether I can thank him for. He made me know the music of the great German. I used to listen: I could not believe such music could come from a German. He followed me about, telling me I was his slave. For

some time I could not sleep. I laughed at myself for composing. He was not an Austrian: but when he was alive he lived in Vienna, the capital of Austria. He ate Austrian bread, and why God gave him such a soul of music I never can think!—Well, by-and-by my father wanted to know what I did in the day, and why they never had anything but potatoes for dinner. My mother came to me, and I told her to say, I took walks. My father said I was an idle girl, and like my mother—who was a slave to work. People are often unjust! So my father said he would watch me. I had to cross the park to give a lesson to a lady who had a husband, and she wanted to sing to him to keep him at home in the evening. I used to pray he might not have much ear for music. One day a gentleman came behind me in the park. He showed me a handkerchief, and asked me if it was mine. I felt for my own and found it in my pocket. He was certain I had dropped it. He looked in the corners for the name, I told him my name—Emilia Alessandra Belloni. He found A. F. G. there. It was a beautiful cambric handkerchief, white and smooth. I told him it must be a gentleman's, as it was so large; but he said he had picked it up close by me, and he could not take it, and I must; and I was obliged to keep it, though I would much rather not. Near the end of the park he left me.'

At this point Wilfrid roused up. 'You met him the next day near the same place?' he remarked.

She turned to him with astonishment on her features. 'How did you know that? How could you know?'

'Sort of thing that generally happens,' said Wilfrid.

'Yes; he was there,' Emilia slowly pursued, controlling her inclination to question further. 'He had forgotten about the handkerchief, for when I saw him, I fancied he might have found the owner. We talked

together. He told me he was in the Army, and I spoke of my father's playing and my singing. He was so fond of music that I promised him he should hear us both. He used to examine my hand, and said they were sensitive fingers for playing. I knew that. He had great hopes of me. He said he would give me a box at the Opera, now and then. I was mad with joy; and so delighted to have made a friend. I had never before made a rich friend. I sang to him in the park. His eyes looked beautiful with pleasure. I know I enchanted him.'

'How old were you then?' inquired Wilfrid.

'Sixteen. I can sing better now, I know; but I had voice then, and he felt that I had. I forgot where we were, till people stood round us, and he hurried me away from them, and said I must sing to him in some quiet place. I promised to, and he promised he would have dinner for me at Richmond Hill, in the country, and he would bring friends to hear me.'

'Go on,' said Wilfrid, rather sharply.

She sighed. 'I only saw him once after that. It was such a miserable day! It rained. It was Saturday. I did not expect to find him in the rain; but there he stood, exactly where he had given me the handkerchief. He smiled kindly, as I came up. I dislike gloomy people! His face was always fresh and nice. His moustache reminded me of Italy. I used to think of him under a great warm sky, with olives and vine-trees and mulberries like my father used to speak of. I could have flung my arms about his neck.'

'Did you?' The cornet gave a strangled note.

'Oh, no!' said Emilia seriously. 'But I told him how happy the thought of going into the country made me, and that it was almost like going to Italy. He told me he would take me to Italy, if I liked. I could have knelt at his feet. Unfortunately his friends could not

come. Still, I was to go, and dine, and float on the water, plucking flowers. I determined to fancy myself in Venice, which is the place my husband must take me to, when I am married to him. I will give him my whole body and soul for his love, when I am there!'

Here the cornet was capable of articulate music for a moment, but it resolved itself into: 'Well, well! Yes, go on!'

'I took his arm this time. It gave me my first timid feeling that I remember, and he laughed at me, and drove it quite away, telling me his name: Augustus Frederick —— what was it?—Augustus Frederick—it began with G something. O me! have I really forgotten? Christian names are always easier to remember. A captain he was—a riding one; just like you. I think you are all kind!'

'Extremely,' muttered the ironical cornet. 'A. F. G.; —those are the initials on the handkerchief!'

'They are!' cried Emilia. 'It must have been his own handkerchief!'

'You have achieved the discovery,' quoth Wilfrid. 'He dropped it there overnight, and found it just as you were passing in the morning.'

'That must be impossible,' said Emilia, and dismissed the subject forthwith, in a feminine power of resolve to be blind to it.

'I am afraid,' she took up her narrative, 'my father is sometimes really almost mad. He does such things! I had walked under this gentleman's umbrella to the bridge between the park and the gardens with the sheep, and beautiful flowers in beds. In an instant my father came up right in our faces. He caught hold of my left hand. I thought he wanted to shake it, for he imitates English ways at times, even with us at home, and shakes our hands when he comes in. But he swung me round. He

stood looking angrily at this gentleman, and cried "Yes! yes!" to every word he spoke. The gentleman bowed to me, and asked me to take his umbrella; but I was afraid to; and my father came to me,—oh, Madonna, think of what he did! I saw that his pockets were very big. He snatched out potatoes, and began throwing them as hard as he could throw them at the gentleman, and struck him with some of them. He threw nine large potatoes! I begged him to think of our dinner; but he cried "Yes! it is our dinner we give to your head, vagabond!" in his English. I could not help running up to the gentleman to beg for his pardon. He told me not to cry, and put some potatoes he had been picking up all into my hand. They were muddy, but he wiped them first; and he said it was not the first time he had stood fire, and then said good-bye; and I slipped the potatoes into my pocket immediately, thankful that they were not wasted. My father pulled me away roughly from the laughing and staring people on the bridge. But I knew the potatoes were only bruised. Even three potatoes will prevent you from starving. They were very fine ones, for I always took care to buy them good. When I reached home——'

Wilfrid had risen, and was yawning with a desperate grimace. He bade her continue, and pitched back heavily into his seat.

'When I reached home and could be alone with my mother, she told me my father had been out watching me the day before, and that he had filled his pockets that morning. She thought he was going to walk out in the country and get people on the road to cook them for him. That is what he has done when he was miserable,—to make himself quite miserable, I think, for he loves streets best. Guess my surprise! My mother was making my head ache with her complaints, when, as I drew out the

potatoes to show her we had some food, there was a purse at the bottom of my pocket,—a beautiful green purse! O that kind gentleman! He must have put it in my hand with the potatoes that my father flung at him! How I have cried to think that I may never sing to him my best to please him! My mother and I opened the purse eagerly. It had ten pounds in paper money, and five sovereigns, and silver,—I think four shillings. We determined to keep it a secret; and then we thought of the best way of spending it, and decided not to spend it all, but to keep some for when we wanted it dreadfully, and for a lesson or two for me now and then, and a music-score, and perhaps a good violin for my father, and new strings for him and me, and meat dinners now and then, and perhaps a day in the country: for that was always one of my dreams as I watched the clouds flying over London. They seemed to be always coming from happy places and going to happy places, never stopping where I was! I cannot be sorrowful long. You know that song of mine that you like so much—my own composing? It was a song about that kind gentleman. I got words to suit it as well as I could, from a penny paper, but they don't mean anything that I mean, and they are only words.'

She did not appear to hear the gallant cornet's denial that he cared particularly for that song.

'What I meant was,—that gentleman speaks—"I have fought for Italy; I am an English hero and have fought for Italy, because of an Italian child; but now I am wounded and a prisoner. When you shoot me, cruel Austrians, I shall hear her voice and think of nothing else, so you cannot hurt me."'

Emilia turned spitefully on herself at this close. 'How I spoil it! My words are always stupid, when I feel.—Well, now my mother and I were quite peaceful,

and my father was better fed. One night he brought home a Jew gentleman, beautifully dressed, with diamonds all over him. He sparkled like the Christmas cakes in pastrycooks' windows. I sang to him, and he made quite a noise about me. But the man made me so uncomfortable, touching my shoulders, and I could not bear his hands, even when he was praising me. I sang to him till the landlady made me leave off, because of the other lodgers who wanted to sleep. He came every evening; and then said I should sing at a concert. It turned out to be a public-house, and my father would not let me go; but I was sorry; for in public the man could not touch me as he did. It damped the voice!'

'I should like to know where that fellow lives,' cried the cornet.

'I don't know, I 'm sure,' she said. 'He lends money. Do you want any? I heard your sisters say something, one day. You can always have all that I have, you know.'

A quick spirit of pity and honest kindness went through Wilfrid's veins and threatened to play the woman with his eyes, for a moment. He took her hand and pressed it. She put her lips to his fingers.

'Once,' she continued, 'when the Jew gentleman had left, I spoke to my father of his way with me, and then my father took me on his knee, and the things he told me of what that man felt for me made my mother come and tear me away to bed. I was obliged to submit to the Jew gentleman patting and touching me always. He used to crush my dreams afterwards! I know my voice was going. My father was so eager for me to please him, I did my best; but I felt dull, and used to sit and shake my head at my harp, crying; or else I felt like an angry animal, and could have torn the strings.

'Think how astonished I was when my mother came

to me to say my father had money in his pockets!—one pound, seventeen shillings, she counted: and he had not been playing! Then he brought home a new violin, and he said to me, "I shall go; I shall play; I am Orphée, and dinners shall rise!" I was glad, and kissed him; and he said, "This is Sandra's gift to me," showing the violin. I only knew what that meant two days afterwards. Is a girl not seventeen fit to be married?'

With this abrupt and singular question she had taken an indignant figure, and her eyes were fiery: so that Wilfrid thought her much fitter than a minute before.

'Married!' she exclaimed. 'My mother told me about that. You do not belong to yourself: you are tied down. You are a slave, a drudge; mustn't dream, mustn't think! I hate it. By-and-by, I suppose it will happen. Not yet! And yet that man offered to take me to Italy. It was the Jew gentleman. He said I should make money, if he took me, and grow as rich as princesses. He brought a friend to hear me, another Jew gentleman; and he was delighted, and he met me near our door the very next morning, and offered me a ring with blue stones, and he proposed to marry me also, and take me to Italy, if I would give up his friend and choose him instead. This man did not touch me, and, do you know, for some time I really thought I almost, very nearly, might,—if it had not been for his face! It was impossible to go to Italy—yes, to go to heaven!—through that face of his! That face of his was just like the pictures of dancing men with animals' hairy legs and hoofs in an old thick poetry book belonging to my mother. Just fancy a nose that seemed to be pecking at great fat red lips! He met me and pressed me to go continually, till all of a sudden up came the first Jew gentleman, and

he cried out quite loud in the street that he was being robbed by the other; and they stood and made a noise in the street, and I ran away. But then I heard that my father had borrowed money from the one who came first, and that his violin came from that man; and my father told me the violin would be taken from him, and he would have to go to prison, if I did not marry that man. I went and cried in my mother's arms. I shall never forget her kindness; for though she could never see anybody crying without crying herself, she did not, and was quiet as a mouse, because she knew how her voice hurt me. There 's a large print-shop in one of the great streets of London, with coloured views of Italy. I used to go there once, and stand there for I don't know how long, looking at them, and trying to get those Jew gentlemen——'

'Call them Jews—they 're not gentlemen,' interposed Wilfrid.

'Jews,' she obeyed the dictate, 'out of my mind. When I saw the views of Italy they danced and grinned up and down the pictures. Oh, horrible! There was no singing for me then. My music died. At last that oldish lady gave up her lessons, and said to me, "You little rogue! you will do what I do, some day"; for she was going to be married to that young man who thought her voice so much improved; and she paid me three pounds, and gave me one pound more, and some ribbons and gloves. I went at once to my mother, and made her give me five pounds out of the gentleman's purse. I took my harp and music-scores. I did not know where I was going, but only that I could not stop. My mother cried: but she helped to pack my things. If she disobeys me I act my father, and tower over her, and frown, and make her mild. She was such a poor good slave to me that day! but I trusted her no farther than the door. There I kissed her, full of love, and reached

the railway. They asked me where I was going, and named places to me: I did not know one. I shut my eyes, and prayed to be directed, and chose Hillford. In the train I was full of music in a moment. There I met farmer Wilson, of the farm near us—where your sisters found me; and he was kind, and asked me about myself; and I mentioned lodgings, and that I longed for woods and meadows. Just as we were getting out of the train, he said I was to come with him; and I did, very gladly. Then I met you; and I am here. All because I prayed to be directed—I do think that!'

Emilia clasped her hands, and looked pensively at the horizon sky, with a face of calm gratefulness.

The cornet was on his legs. 'So!' he said. 'And you never saw anything more of that fellow you kissed in the park?'

'Kissed?—that gentleman?' returned Emilia. 'I have not kissed him. He did not want it. Men kiss us when we are happy, and we kiss them when they are unhappy.'

Wilfrid was perhaps incompetent to test the truth of this profound aphoristic remark, delivered with the simplicity of natural conviction. The narrative had, to his thinking, quite released from him his temporary subjection to this little lady's sway. All that he felt for her personally now was pity. It speaks something for the strength of the sentiment with which he had first conceived her, that it was not pelted to death, and turned to infinite disgust, by her potatoes. For sentiment is a dainty, delicate thing, incapable of bearing much: revengeful, too, when it is outraged. Bruised and disfigured, it stood up still, and fought against them. They were very fine ones, as Emilia said, and they hit him hard. However, he pitied her, and that protected him

like a shield. He told his sisters a tale of his own concerning the strange damsel, humorously enough to make them see that he enjoyed her presence as that of no common oddity.

CHAPTER VII

THREATS OF A CRISIS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF BROOKFIELD: AND OF THE VIRTUE RESIDENT IN A TAILCOAT

While Emilia was giving Wilfrid her history in the garden, the ladies of Brookfield were holding consultation over a matter which was well calculated to perplex and irritate them excessively. Mr. Pole had received a curious short epistle from Mrs. Chump, informing him of the atrocious treatment she had met with at the hands of his daughter; and instead of reviewing the orthography, incoherence, and deliberate vulgarity of the said piece of writing with the contempt it deserved, he had taken the unwonted course of telling Arabella that she had done a thing she must necessarily repent of, or in any case make apology for. An Eastern Queen, thus addressed by her Minister of the treasury, could not have felt greater indignation. Arabella had never seen her father show such perturbation of mind. He spoke violently and imperiously. The apology was ordered to be despatched by that night's post, after having been submitted to his inspection. Mr. Pole had uttered mysterious phrases: 'You don't know what you've been doing:—You think the ship 'll go on sailing without wind:—You 'll drive the horse till he drops,' and such like; together with mutterings. The words were of no

import whatsoever to the ladies. They were writings on the wall; untranslateable. But, as when the earth quakes our noble edifices totter, their Palace of the Fine Shades and the Nice Feelings groaned and creaked, and for a moment they thought: 'Where are we?' Very soon they concluded that the speech Arabella had heard was due to their darling papa's defective education.

In the Council of Three, with reference to the letter of apology to Mrs. Chump, Adela proposed, if it pleased Arabella, to fight the battle of the Republic. She was young, and wished both to fight and to lead, as Arabella knew. She was checked. 'It must be left to me,' said Arabella.

'Of course you resist, dear?' Cornelia carelessly questioned.

'Assuredly I do.'

'Better humiliation! better anything! better marriage! than to submit in such a case,' cried Adela.

For, so united were the ladies of Brookfield, and so bent on their grand hazy object, that they looked upon married life unfavourably: and they had besides an idea that Wedlock, until 'late in life' (the age of thirty, say), was the burial alive of woman intellectual.

Toward midday the ladies put on their garden hats and went into the grounds together, for no particular purpose. Near the West copse they beheld Mr. Pole with Wilfrid and Emilia talking to a strange gentleman. Assuming a proper dignity, they advanced, when, to their horror, Emilia ran up to them crying: 'This is Mr. Purcell Barrett, the gentleman who plays the organ at church. I met him in the woods before I knew you. I played for him the other Sunday, and I want you to know him.'

She had hold of Arabella's hand and was drawing her

on. There was no opportunity for retreat. Wilfrid looked as if he had already swallowed the dose. Almost precipitated into the arms of the ladies, Mr. Barrett bowed. He was a tolerably youthful man, as decently attired as old black cloth could help him to be. A sharp inspection satisfied the ladies that his hat and boots were inoffensive: whereupon they gave him the three shades of distance, tempered so as not to wound his susceptible poverty.

The superlative Polar degree appeared to invigorate Mr. Barrett. He devoted his remarks mainly to Cornelia, and cheerfully received her frozen monosyllables in exchange. The ladies talked of Organs and Art, Emilia and Opera. He knew this and that great organ, and all the operas; but he amazed the ladies by talking as if he knew great people likewise. This brought out Mr. Pole, who, since he had purchased Brookfield, had been extinguished by them and had not once thoroughly enjoyed his money's worth. A courtly poor man was a real pleasure to him.

Giving a semicircular sweep of his arm: 'Here you see my little estate, sir,' he said. 'You 've seen plenty bigger in Germany, and England too. We can't get more than this handful in our tight little island. Unless born to it, of course. Well! we must be grateful that all our nobility don't go to the dogs. We must preserve our great names. I speak against my own interest.'

He lifted Adela's chin on his forefinger. She kept her eyes demurely downward, and then gazed at her sisters with gravity. These ladies took a view of Mr. Barrett. His features wore an admirable expression of simple interest. 'Well, sir; suppose you dine with us to-day?' Mr. Pole bounced out. 'Neighbours should be neighbourly.'

This abrupt invitation was decorously accepted.

'Plain dinner, you know. Nothing like what you get at the tables of those Erzhogs, as you call 'em, over in Germany. Simple fare; sound wine! At all events, it won't hurt you. You 'll come!'

Mr. Barrett bowed, murmuring thanks. This was the very man Mr. Pole wanted to have at his board occasionally: one who had known great people, and would be thankful for a dinner. He could depreciate himself as a mere wealthy British merchant imposingly before such a man. His daughters had completely cut him off from his cronies; and the sense of restriction, and compression, and that his own house was fast becoming alien territory to him, made him pounce upon the gentlemanly organist. His daughters wondered why he should, in the presence of this stranger, exaggerate his peculiar style of speech. But the worthy merchant's consciousness of his identity was vanishing under the iron social rule of the ladies. His perishing individuality prompted the inexplicable invitation, and the form of it.

After Mr. Barrett had departed, the ladies ventured to remonstrate with their papa. He at once replied by asking whether the letter to Mrs. Chump had been written; and hearing that it had not, he desired that Arabella should go into the house and compose it straightway. The ladies coloured. To Adela's astonishment, she found that Arabella had turned. Joining her, she said, 'Dearest, what a moment you have lost! We could have stood firm, continually changeing the theme from Chump to Barrett, Barrett to Chump, till papa's head would have twirled. He would have begun to think Mr. Barrett the Irish widow, and Mrs. Chump the organist.'

Arabella rejoined: 'Your wit misleads you, darling. I know what I am about. I decline a wordy contest. To approach to a quarrel, or, say dispute, with one's parent

àpropos of such a person, is something worse than evil policy, don't you think?'

So strongly did the sisters admire this delicate way of masking a piece of rank cowardice, that they forgave her. The craven feeling was common to them all,—which made it still more difficult to forgive her.

'Of course, we resist?' said Cornelia.

'Undoubtedly.'

'We retire and retire,' Adela remarked. 'We waste the royal forces. But, dear me, that makes us insurgents!'

She laughed, being slightly frivolous. Her elders had the proper sentimental worship of youth and its supposed quality of innocence, and caressed her.

At the ringing of the second dinner-bell, Mr. Pole ran to the foot of the stairs and shouted for Arabella, who returned no answer, and was late in her appearance at table. Grace concluded, Mr. Pole said, 'Letter gone? I wanted to see it, you know.'

'It was as well not, papa,' Arabella replied.

Mr. Pole shook his head seriously. The ladies were thankful for the presence of Mr. Barrett. And lo! this man was in perfect evening uniform. He looked as gentlemanly a visitor as one might wish to see. There was no trace of the poor organist. Poverty seemed rather a gold-edge to his tail-coat than a rebuke to it; just as, contrariwise, great wealth is, to the imagination, really set off by a careless costume. One need not explain how the mind acts in such cases: the fact, as I have put it, is indisputable. And let the young men of our generation mark the present chapter, that they may know the virtue residing in a tail-coat, and cling to it, whether buffeted by the waves, or burnt out by the fire, of evil angry fortune. His tail-coat safe, the youthful Briton is always ready for any change in the mind of the moody

Goddess. And it is an almost certain thing that, presuming her to have a damsel of condition in view for him as a compensation for the slaps he has received, he must lose her, he cannot enter a mutual path with her, if he shall have failed to retain this article of a black tail, his social passport. I mean of course that he retain respect for the article in question. Respect for it firmly seated in his mind, the tail may be said to be always handy. It is fortune's uniform in Britain: the candlestick, if I may dare to say so, to the candle; nor need any young islander despair of getting to himself her best gifts, while he has her uniform at command, as glossy as may be.

The ladies of Brookfield were really stormed by Mr. Barrett's elegant tail. When, the first glass of wine nodded over, Mr. Pole continued the discourse of the morning, with allusions to French cooks, and his cook, their sympathies were taken captive by Mr. Barrett's tact: the door to their sympathies having been opened to him as it were by his attire. They could not guess what necessity urged Mr. Pole to assert his locked-up self so vehemently; but it certainly made the stranger shine with a beautiful mild lustre. Their spirits partly succumbed to him by a process too lengthened to explain here. Indeed, I dare do no more than hint at these mysteries of feminine emotion. I beg you to believe that when we are dealing with that wonder, the human heart female, the part played by a tail-coat and a composed demeanour is not insignificant. No doubt the ladies of Brookfield would have rebutted the idea of a tail-coat influencing them in any way as monstrous. But why was it, when Mr. Pole again harped on his cook, in almost similar words, that they were drawn to meet the eyes of the stranger, on whom they printed one of the most fabulously faint fleeting looks imaginable, with

a proportionately big meaning for him that might read it? It must have been that this uniform of a tail had laid a basis of equality for the hour, otherwise they never would have done so; nor would he have enjoyed the chance of showing them that he could respond to the remotest mystic indications, with a muffled adroitness equal to their own, and so encouraged them to commence a language leading to intimacy with a rapidity that may well appear magical to the uninitiated. In short, the man really had the language of the very elect of polite society. If you are not versed in this alphabet of mute intelligence, you are in the ranks with waiters and linen-drapers, and are, as far as ladies are concerned, tail-coated to no purpose.

Mr. Pole's fresh allusion to his cook: 'I hope you don't think I keep a man! No; no; not in the country. Wouldn't do. Plays the deuce, you know. My opinion is, Mrs. Mallow 's as clever as any man-cook going. I 'd back her':—and Mr. Barrett's speech: 'She is an excellent person!' delivered briefly, with no obtrusion of weariness, confirmed the triumph of the latter; a triumph all the greater, that he seemed unconscious of it. They leaped at one bound to the conclusion that there was a romance attached to him. Do not be startled. An attested tail-coat, clearly out of its element, must contain a story: that story must be interesting; until its secret is divulged, the subtle essence of it spreads an aureole around the tail. The ladies declared, in their subsequent midnight conference, that Mr. Barrett was fit for any society. They had visions of a great family reduced; of a proud son choosing to earn his bread honourably and humbly, by turning an exquisite taste to account. Many visions of him they had, and were pleased.

Patronage of those beneath, much more than the

courting of those above them, delighted the ladies of Brookfield. They allowed Emilia to give Mr. Barrett invitations, and he became a frequent visitor; always neat, pathetically well-brushed, and a pleasanter pet than Emilia, because he never shocked their niceties. He was an excellent talker, and was very soon engaged in regular contests with the argumentative Cornelia. Their political views were not always the same, as Cornelia sometimes had read the paper before he arrived. Happily, on questions of religion, they coincided. Theories of education occupied them mainly. In these contests Mr. Barrett did not fail to acknowledge his errors, when convicted, and his acknowledgment was hearty and ample. She had many clear triumphs. Still, he could be positive; a very great charm in him. Women cannot repose on a man who is not positive; nor have they much gratification in confounding him. Wouldst thou, O man, amorously inclining! attract to thee superior women, be positive. Be stupidly positive, rather than dubious at all. Face fearful questions with a vizor of brass. Array thyself in dogmas. Show thy decisive judgement on the side of established power, or thy enthusiasm in the rebel ranks, if it must be so; but be firm. Waver not. If women could tolerate waverings and weakness, and did not rush to the adoration of decision of mind, we should not behold them turning contemptuously from philosophers in their agony, to find refuge in the arms of smirking orthodoxy. I do not say that Mr. Barrett ventured to play the intelligent Cornelia like a fish; but such a fish was best secured by the method he adopted: that of giving her signal victory in trifles, while on vital matters he held his own.

Very pleasant evenings now passed at Brookfield, which were not at all disturbed by the wonder expressed from

time to time by Mr. Pole, that he had not heard from Martha, meaning Mrs. Chump. 'You have Emilia,' the ladies said; this being equivalent to 'She is one of that sort'; and Mr. Pole understood it so, and fastened Emilia in one arm, with 'Now, a kiss, my dear, and then a toon.' Emilia readily gave both. As often as he heard instances of her want of ladylike training, he would say, 'Keep her here; we 'll better her.' Mr. Barrett assisted the ladies to see that there was more in Emilia than even Mr. Pericles had perceived. Her story had become partially known to them; and with two friendly dependents of the household, one a gentleman and the other a genius, they felt that they had really attained a certain eminence, which is a thing to be felt only when we have something *under* our feet. Flying about with a desperate grip on the extreme skirts of aristocracy, the ladies knew to be the elevation of dependency, not true eminence; and though they admired the kite, they by no means wished to form a part of its tail. They had brains. A circle was what they wanted, and they had not to learn that this is to be found or made only in the liberally-educated class, into the atmosphere of which they pressed like dungeoned plants. The parasite completes the animal, and a dependent assures us of our position. The ladies of Brookfield, therefore, let Emilia cling to them, remarking, that it seemed to be their papa's settled wish that she should reside among them for a time. Consequently, if the indulgence had ever to be regretted, they would not be to blame. In their hearts they were aware that it was Emilia who had obtained for them their first invitation to Lady Gosstre's. Gratitude was not a part of their policy, but when it assisted a recognition of material facts they did not repress it. 'And if,' they said, 'we can succeed in polishing her and toning her, she may have something

to thank us for, in the event of her ultimately making a name.' That event being of course necessary for the development of so proper a sentiment. Thus the rides with Wilfrid continued, and the sweet quiet evenings when she sang.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH A BIG DRUM SPEEDS THE MARCH OF EMILIA'S HISTORY

THE windows of Brookfield were thrown open to the air of May, and bees wandered into the rooms, gold spots of sunshine danced along the floors. The garden-walks were dazzling, and the ladies went from flower-bed to flower-bed in broad garden hats that were, as an occasional light glance flung at a window-pane assured Adela, becoming. Sunshine had burst on them suddenly, and there was no hat to be found for Emilia, so Wilfrid placed his gold-laced foraging-cap on her head, and the ladies, after a moment's misgiving, allowed her to wear it, and turned to observe her now and then. There was never pertness in Emilia's look, which on the contrary was singularly large and calm when it reposed: perhaps her dramatic instinct prompted her half-jaunty manner of leaning against the sunny corner of the house where the Chinese honeysuckle climbed. She was talking to Wilfrid. Her laughter seemed careless and easy, and in keeping with the Southern litheness of her attitude.

'To suit the cap; it 's all to suit the cap,' said Adela, the keen of eye. Yet, critical as was this lady, she acknowledged that it was no mere acting effort to suit the cap.

The philosopher (I would keep him back if I could) bids us mark that the crown and flower of the nervous system, the head, is necessarily sensitive, and to that degree that whatsoever we place on it, does, for a certain period, change and shape us. Of course the instant we call up the forces of the brain, much of the impression departs: but what remains is powerful, and fine-nerved. Woman is especially subject to it. A girl may put on her brother's boots, and they will not affect her spirit strongly; but as soon as she puts on her brother's hat, she gives him a manly nod. The same philosopher who fathers his dulness on me, asserts that the modern vice or fastness ('Trotting on the Epicene Border,' he has it) is bred by apparently harmless practices of this description. He offers to turn the current of a Republican's brain, by resting a coronet on his forehead for just five seconds.

Howsoever these things be, it was true that Emilia's feet presently crossed, and she was soon to be seen with her right elbow doubled against her head as she leaned to the wall, and the little left fist stuck at her belt. And I maintain that she had no sense at all of acting Spanish prince disguised as page. Nor had she an idea that she was making her friend Wilfrid's heart perform to her lightest words and actions, like any trained milk-white steed in a circus. Sunlight, as well as Wilfrid's braided cap, had some magical influence on her. He assured her that she looked a charming boy, and she said, 'Do I?' just lifting her chin.

A gardener was shaving the lawn.

'Please, spare those daisies,' cried Emilia. 'Why do you cut away daisies?'

The gardener objected that he really must make the lawn smooth. Emilia called to Adela, who came, and hearing the case, said: 'Now this is nice of you. I like you to love daisies and wish to protect them. They disfigure

a *lawn*, you know.' And Adela stooped, and picked one, and called it a pet name, and dropped it.

She returned to her sisters in the conservatory, and meeting Mr. Barrett at the door, made the incident a topic. 'You know how greatly our Emilia rejoices us when she shows sentiment, and our thirst is to direct her to appreciate Nature in its humility as well as its grandeur.'

'One expects her to have all poetical feelings,' said Mr. Barrett, while they walked forth to the lawn sloping to the tufted park grass.

Cornelia said: 'You have read Mr. Runningbrook's story?'

'Yes.'

But the man had not brought it back, and her name was in it, written with her own hand.

'Are you of my opinion in the matter?'

'In the matter of the style? I am and I am not. Your condemnation may be correct in itself; but you say, "He coins words"; and he certainly forces the phrase here and there, I must admit. The point to be considered is, whether friction demands a perfectly smooth surface. Undoubtedly a scientific work does, and a philosophical treatise should. When we ask for facts simply, we feel the intrusion of a style. Of fiction it is part. In the one case the classical robe, in the other any mediæval phantasy of clothing.'

'Yes; true'; said Cornelia, hesitating over her argument. 'Well, I must conclude that I am not imaginative.'

'On the contrary, permit me to say that you are. But your imagination is unpractised, and asks to be fed with a spoon. We English are more imaginative than most nations.'

'Then, why is it not manifested?'

'We are still fighting against the Puritan element, in literature as elsewhere.'

'Your old bugbear, Mr. Barrett!'

'And more than this: our language is not rich in subtleties for prose. A writer who is not servile and has insight, must coin from his own mint. In poetry we are rich enough; but in prose also we owe everything to the licence our poets have taken in the teeth of critics. Shall I give you examples? It is not necessary. Our simplest prose style is nearer to poetry with us, for this reason, that the poets have made it. Read French poetry. With the first couplet the sails are full, and you have left the shores of prose far behind. Mr. Runningbrook coins words and risks expressions because an imaginative Englishman, pen in hand, is the cadet and vagabond of the family—an exploring adventurer; whereas to a Frenchman it all comes inherited like a well-filled purse. The audacity of the French mind, and the French habit of quick social intercourse, have made them nationally far richer in language. Let me add, individually as much poorer. Read their stereotyped descriptions. They all say the same things. They have one big Gallic trumpet. Wonderfully eloquent: we feel that: but the person does not speak. And now, you will be surprised to learn that, notwithstanding what I have said, I should still side with Mr. Runningbrook's fair critic, rather than with him. The reason is, that the necessity to write as he does is so great that a strong barrier—a *chevaux-de-frise* of pen points—must be raised against every newly minted word and hazardous coiner, or we shall be inundated. If he can leap the barrier he and his goods must be admitted. So it has been with our greatest, so it must be with the rest of them, or we shall have a Transatlantic literature. By no means desirable, I think. Yet, see: when a piece of Trans-

atlantic slang happens to be tellingly true—something coined from an absolute experience; from a fight with the elements—we cannot resist it: it invades us. In the same way poetic rashness of the right quality enriches the language. I would make it prove its quality.'

Cornelia walked on gravely. His excuse for dilating on the theme, prompted her to say: 'You give me new views': while all her reflections sounded from the depths: 'And yet, the man who talks thus is a hired organ-player!'

This recurring thought, more than the cogency of the new views, kept her from combating certain fallacies in them which had struck her.

'Why do you not write yourself, Mr. Barrett?'

'I have not the habit.'

'The habit!'

'I have not heard the call.'

'Should it not come from within?'

'And how are we to know it?'

'If it calls to you loudly!'

'Then I know it to be vanity.'

'But the wish to make a name is not vanity.'

'The wish to conceal a name may exist.'

Cornelia took one of those little sly glances at his features which print them on the brain. The melancholy of his words threw a sombre hue about him, and she began to think with mournfulness of those firm thin lips fronting misfortune: those sunken blue eyes under its shadow.

They walked up to Mr. Pole, who was standing with Wilfrid and Emilia on the lawn; giving ear to a noise in the distance.

A big drum sounded on the confines of the Brookfield estate. Soon it was seen entering the precincts at one of the principal gates, followed by trombone, and horn,

and fife. In the rear trooped a regiment of Sunday-garmented villagers, with a rambling tail of loose-minded boys and girls. Blue and yellow ribands dangled from broad beaver hats, and there were rosettes of the true-blue mingled with yellow at buttonholes; and there was fun on the line of march. Jokes plumped deep into the ribs, and were answered with intelligent vivacity in the shape of hearty thwacks, delivered wherever a surface was favourable: a mode of repartee worthy of general adoption, inasmuch as it can be passed on, and so with certainty made to strike your neighbour as forcibly as yourself: of which felicity of propagation verbal wit cannot always boast. In the line of procession, the hat of a member of the corps shot sheer into the sky from the compressed energy of his brain; for he and all his comrades vociferously denied having cast it up, and no other solution was possible. This mysterious incident may tell you that beer was thus early in the morning abroad. In fact, it was the procession day of a provincial Club-feast or celebration of the nuptials of Beef and Beer; whereof later you shall behold the illustrious offspring.

All the Brookfield household were now upon the lawn, awaiting the attack. Mr. Pole would have liked to impound the impouring host, drum and all, for the audacity of the trespass, and then to have fed them liberally, as a return for the compliment. Aware that he was being treated to the honours of a great man of the neighbourhood, he determined to take it cheerfully.

'Come; no laughing!' he said, directing a glance at the maids who were ranged behind their mistresses. ''Hem! we must look pleased: we mustn't mind their music, if they mean well.'

Emilia, whose face was dismally screwed up at the nerve-searching discord, said: 'Why do they try to play anything but a drum?'

'In the country,—in the country'; Mr. Pole emphasized. 'We put up with this kind of thing in the country. Different in town; but we—a—say nothing in the country. We must encourage respect for the gentry, in the country. One of the penalties of a country life. Not much harm in it. New duties in the country.'

He continued to speak to himself. In proportion as he grew aware of the unnecessary nervous agitation into which the drum was throwing him, he assumed an air of repose, and said to Wilfrid: 'Read the paper to-day?' and to Arabella, 'Quiet family dinner, I suppose?'

'Yes, sir,' he remarked to Mr. Barrett, as if resuming an old conversation: 'I dare say, you 've seen better marching in foreign parts. Right—left; right—left. Ha! ha! And not so bad, not so bad, I call it! with their right—left; right—left. Ha! ha! You 've seen better. No need to tell me that. But, in England, we look to the meaning of things. We 're a practical people. What 's more, we 're volunteers. Volunteers in everything. We can't make a regiment of ploughmen march like clock-work in a minute; and we don't want to. But, give me the choice; I 'll back a body of volunteers any day.'

'I would rather be backed by them, sir,' said Mr. Barrett.

'Very good. I mean that. Honest intelligent industry backing rank and wealth! That makes a nation strong. Look at England!'

Mr. Barrett observed him stand out largely, as if filled by the spirit of the big drum.

That instrument now gave a final flourish and bang: whereat Sound, as if knocked on the head, died languishingly.

And behold, a spokesman was seen in relief upon a

background of grins, that were oddly intermixed with countenances of extraordinary solemnity.

The same commenced his propitiatory remarks by assuring the proprietor of Brookfield that he, the spokesman, and every man present, knew they had taken a liberty in coming upon Squire Pole's grounds without leave or warning. They knew likewise that Squire Pole excused them.

Chorus of shouts from the divining brethren.

Right glad they were to have such a gentleman as Squire Pole among them: and if nobody gave him a welcome last year, that was not the fault of the Yellow-and-Blues. Eh, my boys?

Groans and cheers.

Right sure was spokesman that Squire Pole was the friend of the poor man, and liked nothing better than to see him enjoy his holiday. As why shouldn't he enjoy his holiday now and then, and have a bit of relaxation as well as other men?

Acquiescent token on the part of the new dignitary, Squire Pole.

Spokesman was hereby encouraged to put it boldly, whether a man was not a man all the world over.

'For a' that!' was sung out by some rare bookworm to rearward: but no Scot being present, no frenzy followed the quotation.

It was announced that the Club had come to do homage to Squire Pole and ladies: the Junction Club of Ipley and Hillford. What did Junction mean? Junction meant Harmony. Harmonious they were, to be sure: so they joined to good purpose.

Mr. Barrett sought Emilia's eyes smilingly, but she was intent on the proceedings.

A cry of 'Bundle o' sticks, Tom Breeks. Don't let slip 'bout bundle o' sticks,' pulled spokesman up short.

He turned hurriedly to say, 'All right,' and inflated his chest to do justice to the illustration of the faggots of Æsop: but Mr. Tom Breeks had either taken in too much air, or the ale that had hitherto successfully prompted him was antipathetic to the nice delicacy of an apologue; for now his arm began to work and his forehead had to be mopped, and he lashed the words 'Union and Harmony' right and left, until, coming on a sentence that sounded in his ears like the close of his speech, he stared ahead, with a dim idea that he had missed a point. 'Bundle o' sticks,' lustily shouted, revived his apprehension; but the sole effect was to make him look on the ground and lift his hat on the point of a perplexed finger. He could not conceive how the bundle of sticks was to be brought in now; or what to say concerning them. Union and Harmony:—what more could be said? Mr. Tom Breeks tried a remonstrance with his backers. He declared to them that he had finished, and *had* brought in the Bundle. They replied that they had not heard it; that the Bundle was the foundation-sentiment of the Club; the first toast, after the Crown; and that he must go on until the Bundle had been brought in. Hereat, the unhappy man faced Squire Pole again. It was too abject a position for an Englishman to endure. Tom Breeks cast his hat to earth. 'I 'm dashed if I *can* bring in the bundle!'

There was no telling how conduct like this might have been received by the Yellow-and-Blues if Mr. Barrett had not spoken. 'You mean everything when you say "Union," and you 're quite right not to be tautological. You can't give such a blow with your fingers as you can with your fists, can you?'

Up went a score of fists. 'We 've the fists: we 've the fists,' was shouted.

Cornelia, smiling on Mr. Barrett, asked him why he had

confused the poor people with the long word 'tautological.'

'I threw it as a bone,' said he. 'I think you will observe that they are already quieter. They are reflecting on what it signifies, and will by-and-by quarrel as to the spelling of it. At any rate it occupies them.'

Cornelia laughed inwardly, and marked with pain that his own humour gave him no merriment.

At the subsiding of the echoes that coupled Squire Pole and the Junction Club together, Squire Pole replied. He wished them well. He was glad to see them, and sorry he had not ale enough on the premises to regale every man of them. Clubs were great institutions. One fist was stronger than a thousand fingers—'as my friend here said just now.' Hereat the eyelids of Cornelia shed another queenly smile on the happy originator of the remark.

Squire Pole then descended to business. He named the amount of his donation. At this practical sign of his support, heaven heard the gratitude of the good fellows. The drum awoke from its torpor, and summoned its brethren of the band to give their various versions of the National Anthem.

'*Can't* they be stopped?' Emilia murmured, clenching her little hands.

The patriotic melody, delivered in sturdy democratic fashion, had to be endured. It died hard, but did come to an end, piecemeal. Tom Breeks then retired from the front, and became a unit once more. There were flourishes that indicated a termination of the proceedings, when another fellow was propelled in advance, and he, shuffling and ducking his head, to the cries of 'Out wi' it, Jim!' and, 'Where 's your stomach?' came still further forward, and showed a most obsequious grin.

'Why, it 's Jim!' exclaimed Emilia, on whom Jim's

eyes were fastened. Stepping nearer, she said, 'Do you want to speak to me?'

Jim had this to say: which, divested of his petition for pardon on the strength of his perfect knowledge that he took a liberty, was, that the young lady had promised, while staying at Wilson's farm, that she would sing to the Club-fellows on the night of their feast.

'I towl'd 'em they 'd have a rare treat, miss,' mumbled Jim, 'and they 're all right mad for 't, that they be—bain't ye, boys?'

That they were! with not a few of the gesticulations of madness too.

Emilia said: 'I promised I would sing to them. I remember it quite well. Of course I will keep my promise.'

A tumult of acclamation welcomed her words, and Jim looked immensely delighted.

She was informed by several voices that they were the Yellow-and-Blues, and not the Blues: that she must not go to the wrong set: and that their booth was on Ipley Common: and that they, the Junction Club, only would honour her rightly for the honour she was going to do them: all of which Emilia said she would bear in mind.

Jim then retired hastily, having done something that stout morning ale would alone have qualified him to perform. The drum, in the noble belief that it was leading, announced the return march, and with three cheers for Squire Pole, and a crowning one for the ladies, away trooped the procession.

CHAPTER IX

THE RIVAL CLUBS

Hardly had the last sound of the drum passed out of hearing, when the elastic thunder of a fresh one claimed attention. The truth being, that the Junction Club of Ipley and Hillford, whose colours were yellow and blue, was a seceder from the old-established Hillford Club, on which it had this day shamefully stolen a march by parading everywhere in the place of it, and disputing not only its pasture-grounds but its identity.

There is no instrument the sound of which proclaims such a vast internal satisfaction as the drum. I know not whether it be that the sense we have of the corpulency of this instrument predisposes us to imagine it supremely content: as when an alderman is heard snoring the world is assured that it listens to the voice of its own exceeding gratulation. A light heart in a fat body ravishes not only the world but the philosopher. If monotonous, the one note of the drum is very correct. Like the speaking of great Nature, what it means is implied by the measure. When the drum beats to the measure of a common human pulsation it has a conquering power: inspiring us neither to dance nor to trail the members, but to march as life does, regularly, and in hearty good order, and with a not exhaustive jollity. It is a sacred instrument.

Now the drum which is heard to play in this cheerful fashion, while at the same time we know that discomfiture is cruelly harrying it: that its inmost feelings are wounded, and that worse is in store for it, affects the contemplative mind with an inexpressibly grotesque commiseration. Do but listen to this one, which is the

joint corporate voice of the men of Hillford. Outgeneraled, plundered, turned to ridicule, it thumps with unabated briskness. Here indeed might Sentimentalism shed a fertile tear!

Anticipating that it will eventually be hung up among our national symbols, I proceed. The drum of Hillford entered the Brookfield grounds as Ipley had done, and with a similar body of decorated Clubmen; sounding along until it faced the astonished proprietor, who held up his hand and requested to know the purpose of the visit. One sentence of explanation sufficed.

'What!' cried Mr. Pole, 'do you think you can milk a cow twice in ten minutes?'

Several of the Hillford men acknowledged that it would be rather sharp work.

Their case was stated: whereupon Mr. Pole told them that he had just been 'milked,' and regretted it, but requested them to see that he could not possibly be equal to any second proceeding of the sort. On their turning to consult together, he advised them to bear it with fortitude. 'All right, sir!' they said: and a voice from the ranks informed him that their word was 'Jolly.' Then a signal was given, and these indomitable fellows cheered the lord of Brookfield as lustily as if they had accomplished the feat of milking him twice in an hour. Their lively hurrahs set him blinking in extreme discomposure of spirit, and he was fumbling at his pocket, when the drum a little precipitately thumped: the ranks fell into order, and the departure was led by the tune of the 'King of the Cannibal islands': a tune that is certain to create a chorus on the march. On this occasion, the line:—

'Oh! didn't you know you were done, sir?'

became general at the winding up of the tune. Boys with

their elders frisked as they chimed it, casting an emphasis of infinite relish on the declaration 'done'; as if they delighted in applying it to Mr. Pole, though at their own expense.

Soon a verse grew up:—

> 'We march'd and call'd on Mister Pole,
> Who hadn't a penny, upon his soul,
> For Ipley came and took the whole,
> And didn't you know you were *done*, sir!'

I need not point out to the sagacious that Hillford and not Mr. Pole had been 'done'; but this was the genius of the men who transferred the opprobrium to him. Nevertheless, though their manner of welcoming misfortune was such, I, knowing that there was not a deadlier animal than a 'done' Briton, have shudders for Ipley.

We relinquished the stream of an epic in turning away from these mighty drums.

Mr. Pole stood questioning all who surrounded him: 'What could I do? I couldn't subscribe to both. They don't expect that of a lord, and I 'm a commoner. If these fellows quarrel and split, are we to suffer for it? They can't agree, and want us to pay double fines. This is how they serve us.'

Mr. Barrett, rather at a loss to account for his excitement, said, that it must be admitted they had borne the trick played upon them, with remarkable good humour.

'Yes, but,' Mr. Pole fumed, 'I don't. They put *me* in the wrong, between them. They make me uncomfortable. I 've a good mind to withdraw my subscription to those rascals who came first, and have nothing to do with any of them. Then, you see, down I go for a niggardly fellow. That 's the reputation I get. Nothing of this in London! you make your money, pay your rates, and nobody bothers a man.'

'You should have done as our darling here did, papa,' said Adela. 'You should have hinted something that might be construed a promise or not, as we please to read it.'

'If I promise I perform,' returned Mr. Pole.

'Our Hillford people have cause for complaint,' Mr. Barrett observed. And to Emilia: 'You will hardly favour one party more than another, will you?'

'I am for that poor man Jim,' said Emilia. 'He carried my harp evening after evening, and would not even take sixpence for the trouble.'

'Are you really going to sing there?'

'Didn't you hear? I promised.'

'To-night?'

'Yes; certainly.'

'Do you know what it is you have promised?'

'To sing.'

Adela glided to her sisters near at hand, and these ladies presently hemmed Emilia in. They had a method of treating matters they did not countenance, as if nature had never conceived them, and such were the monstrous issue of diseased imaginations. It was hard for Emilia to hear that what she designed to do was 'utterly out of the question and not to be for one moment thought of.' She reiterated, with the same interpreting stress, that she had given her promise.

'Do you know, I praised you for putting them off so cleverly,' said Adela in tones of gentle reproach that bewildered Emilia.

'Must we remind you, then, that you are bound by a previous promise?' Cornelia made a counter-demonstration with the word. 'Have you not promised to dine with us at Lady Gosstre's to-night?'

'Oh, of course I shall keep that,' replied Emilia. 'I intend to. I will sing there, and then I will go and sing

to those poor people, who never hear anything but dreadful music—not music at all, but something that seems to tear your flesh!'

'Never mind our flesh,' said Adela pettishly: melodiously remonstrating the next instant: 'I really thought you could not be in earnest.'

'But,' said Arabella, 'can you find pleasure in wasting your voice and really great capabilities on such people?'

Emilia caught her up—'This poor man? But he loves music: he really knows the good from the bad. He never looks proud but when I sing to him.'

The situation was one that Cornelia particularly enjoyed. Here was a low form of intellect to be instructed as to the precise meaning of a word, the nature of a pledge. 'There can be no harm that I see, in your singing to this man,' she commenced. 'You can bid him come to one of the outhouses here, if you desire, and sing to him. In the evening, after his labour, will be the fit time. But, as your friends, we cannot permit you to demean yourself by going from our house to a public booth, where vulgar men are smoking and drinking beer. I wonder you have the courage to contemplate such an act! You have pledged your word. But if you had pledged your word, child, to swing upon that tree, suspended by your arms, for an hour, could you keep it? I think not; and to recognize an impossibility economizes time and is one of the virtues of a clear understanding. It is incompatible that you should dine with Lady Gosstre, and then run away to a drinking booth. Society will never tolerate one who is familiar with boors. If you are to succeed in life, as we, your friends, can conscientiously say that we most earnestly hope and trust you will do, you must be on good terms with Society. You must! You pledge your word to a piece of folly. Emancipate yourself from it as quickly as possible. *Do* you *see*? This is

foolish: it, therefore, *cannot be*. Decide, as a sensible creature.'

At the close of this harangue, Cornelia, who had stooped slightly to deliver it, regained her stately posture, beautified in Mr. Barrett's sight by the flush which an unwonted exercise in speech had thrown upon her cheeks.

Emilia stood blinking like one sensible of having been chidden in a strange tongue.

'Does it offend you—my going?' she faltered.

'Offend!—our concern is entirely for you,' observed Cornelia.

The explanation drew out a happy sparkle from Emilia's eyes. She seized her hand, kissed it, and cried: 'I do thank you. I know I promised, but indeed I am quite pleased to go!'

Mr. Barrett swung hurriedly round and walked some paces away with his head downward. The ladies remained in a tolerant attitude for a minute or so, silent. They then wheeled with one accord, and Emilia was left to herself.

CHAPTER X

THE LADIES OF BROOKFIELD AT SCHOOL

Richford was an easy drive from Brookfield, through lanes of elm and white hawthorn.

The ladies never acted so well as when they were in the presence of a fact which they acknowledged, but did not recognize. Albeit constrained to admit that this was the first occasion of their ever being on their way to the dinner-table of a person of quality, they could refuse to

look the admission in the face. A peculiar lightness of heart beset them; for brooding ambition is richer in that first realizing step it takes, insignificant though it seem, than in any subsequent achievement. I fear to say that the hearts of the ladies boiled, because visages so sedate, and voices so monotonously indifferent, would witness decidedly against me. The common avoidance of any allusion to Richford testified to the direction of their thoughts; and the absence of a sign of exultation may be accepted as a proof of the magnitude of that happiness of which they might not exhibit a feature. The effort to repress it must have cost them horrible pain. Adela, the youngest of the three, transferred her inward joy to the cottage children, whose staring faces from garden porch and gate flashed by the carriage windows. 'How delighted they look!' she exclaimed more than once, and informed her sisters that a country life was surely the next thing to Paradise. 'Those children do look so happy!' Thus did the weak one cunningly relieve herself. Arabella occupied her mind by giving Emilia leading hints for conduct in the great house. 'On the whole, though there is no harm in your praising particular dishes, as you do at home, it is better in society to say nothing on those subjects until your opinion is asked: and when you speak, it should be as one who passes the subject by. Appreciate flavours, but no dwelling on them! The degrees of an expression of approbation, naturally enough, vary with age. Did *my* instinct prompt me to the discussion of these themes, I should be allowed greater licence than you.' And here Arabella was unable to resist a little bit of the indulgence Adela had taken: 'You are sure to pass a most agreeable evening, and one that you will remember.'

North Pole sat high above such petty consolation;

seldom speaking, save just to show that her ideas ranged at liberty, and could be spontaneously sympathetic on selected topics.

Their ceremonious entrance to the state-room of Richford accomplished, the ladies received the greeting of the affable hostess; quietly perturbed, but not enough so to disorder their artistic contemplation of her open actions, choice of phrase, and by-play. Without communication or pre-arrangement, each knew that the other would not let slip the opportunity, and, after the first five minutes of languid general converse, they were mentally at work comparing notes with one another's imaginary conversations, while they said 'Yes,' and 'Indeed,' and 'I think so,' and appeared to belong to the world about them.

'Merthyr, I do you the honour to hand this young lady to your charge,' said Lady Gosstre, putting on equal terms with Emilia a gentleman of perhaps five-and-thirty years; who reminded her of Mr. Barrett, but was unclouded by that look of firm sadness which characterized the poor organist. Mr. Powys was a travelled Welsh squire, Lady Gosstre's best talker, on whom, as Brookfield learnt to see, she could perfectly rely to preserve the child from any little drawing-room sins or dinner-table misadventures. This gentleman had made sacrifices for the cause of Italy, in money, and, it was said, in blood. He knew the country and loved the people. Brookfield remarked that there was just a foreign tinge in his manner; and that his smile, though social to a degree unknown to the run of English faces, did not give him all to you, and at a second glance seemed plainly to say that he reserved much.

Adela fell to the lot of a hussar-captain: a celebrated beauty, not too foolish. She thought it proper to punish him for his good looks till propitiated by his good temper.

Nobody at Brookfield could remember afterwards who took Arabella down to dinner; she declaring that she had forgotten. Her sisters, not unwilling to see insignificance banished to annihilation, said that it must have been nobody in person, and that he was a very useful guest when ladies were engaged. Cornelia had a different lot. She leaned on the right arm of the Member for Hillford, the statistical debater, Sir Twickenham Pryme, who had twice before, as he ventured to remind her, enjoyed the honour of conversing, if not of dining, with her. Nay, more, he revived their topics. 'And I have come round to your way of thinking as regards hustings addresses,' he said. 'In nine cases out of ten—at least, nineteen-twentieths of the House will furnish instances —one *can* only, as you justly observed, appeal to the comprehension of the mob by pledging oneself either to their appetites or passions, and it is better plainly to state the case and put it to them in figures.' Whether the Baronet knew what he was saying is one matter: he knew what he meant.

Wilfrid was cavalier to Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, of Stornley, about ten miles distant from Hillford; ninth daughter of a nobleman who passed current as the Poor Marquis; he having been ruined when almost a boy in Paris, by the late illustrious Lord Dartford. Her sisters had married captains in the army and navy, lawyers, and parsons, impartially. Lady Charlotte was nine-and-twenty years of age; with clear and telling stone-blue eyes, firm but not unsweet lips, slightly hollowed cheeks, and a jaw that certainly tended to be square. Her colour was healthy. Walking or standing her figure was firmly poised. Her chief attraction was a bell-toned laugh, fresh as a meadow spring. She had met Wilfrid once in the hunting-field, so they soon had common ground to run on.

Mr. Powys made Emilia happy by talking to her of Italy, in the intervals of table anecdotes.

'Why did you leave it?' she said.

'I found I had more shadows than the one allotted me by nature; and as I was accustomed to a black one, and not half a dozen white, I was fairly frightened out of the country.'

'You mean, Austrians.'

'I do.'

'Do you hate them?'

'Not at all.'

'Then, how can you love the Italians?'

'They themselves have taught me to do both; to love them and not to hate their enemies. Your Italians are the least vindictive of all races of men.'

'Merthyr, Merthyr!' went Lady Gosstre; Lady Charlotte murmuring aloud: 'And in the third chapter of the Book of Paradox you will find these words.'

'We afford a practical example and forgive them, do we not?' Mr. Powys smiled at Emilia.

She looked round her, and reddened a little.

'So long as you do not write that Christian word with the point of a stiletto!' said Lady Charlotte.

'You are not mad about the Italians?' Wilfrid addressed her.

'Not mad about anything, I hope. If I am to choose, I prefer the Austrians. A very gentlemanly set of men! At least, so I find them always. Capital horsemen!'

'I will explain to you how it must be,' said Mr. Powys to Emilia. 'An artistic people cannot hate long. Hotly for the time, but the oppression gone, and even in the dream of its going, they are too human to be revengeful.'

'Do we understand such very deep things?' said Lady Gosstre, who was near enough to hear clearly.

'Yes: for if I ask her whether she can hate when her mind is given to music, she knows that she cannot. She can love.'

'Yet I think I have heard some Italian operatic spitfires, and of some!' said Lady Charlotte.

'What opinion do you pronounce in this controversy?' Cornelia made appeal to Sir Twickenham.

'There are multitudes of cases,' he began: and took up another end of his statement: 'It has been computed that five-and-twenty murders per month to a population . . . to a population of ninety thousand souls, is a fair reckoning in a Southern latitude.'

'Then we must allow for the latitude?'

'I think so.'

'And also for the space into which the ninety thousand souls are packed,' quoth Tracy Runningbrook.

'Well! well!' went Sir Twickenham.

'The knife is the law to an Italian of the South,' said Mr. Powys. 'He distrusts any other, because he never gets it. Where law is established, or tolerably secure, the knife is not used. Duels are rare. There is too much bonhomie for the point of honour.'

'I should like to believe that all men are as just to their mistresses,' Lady Charlotte sighed, mock-earnestly.

Presently Emilia touched the arm of Mr. Powys. She looked agitated. 'I want to be told the name of that gentleman.' His eyes were led to rest on the handsome hussar-captain.

'Do you know him?'

'But his name!'

'Do me the favour to look at *me*. Captain Gambier.'

'It is!'

Captain Gambier's face was resolutely kept in profile to her.

'I hear a rumour,' said Lady Gosstre to Arabella, 'that

you think of bidding for the Besworth estate. Are you tired of Brookfield?'

'Not tired; but Brookfield is modern, and I confess that Besworth has won my heart.'

'I shall congratulate myself on having you nearer neighbours. Have you many, or any rivals?'

'There is some talk of the Tinleys wishing to purchase it. I cannot see why.'

'What people are they?' asked Lady Charlotte. 'Do they hunt?'

'Oh, dear, no! They are to society what Dissenters are to religion. I can't describe them otherwise.'

'They pass before me in that description,' said Lady Gosstre.

'Besworth's an excellent centre for hunting,' Lady Charlotte remarked to Wilfrid. 'I've always had an affection for that place. The house is on gravel; the river has trout; there's a splendid sweep of grass for the horses to exercise. I think there must be sixteen spare beds. At all events, I know that number can be made up; so that if you're too poor to live much in London, you can always have your set about you.'

The eyes of the fair economist sparkled as she dwelt on these particular advantages of Besworth.

Richford boasted a show of flowers that might tempt its guests to parade the grounds on balmy evenings. Wilfrid kept by the side of Lady Charlotte. She did not win his taste a bit. Had she been younger, less decided in tone, and without a title, it is very possible that she would have offended his native, secret, and dominating fastidiousness as much as did Emilia. Then, what made him subject at all to her influence, as he felt himself beginning to be? She supplied a deficiency in the youth. He was growing and uncertain: she was set and decisive. In his soul he adored the extreme refinement of woman,

even up to the thin edge of inanity (which neighbours what the philosopher could tell him if he would, and would, if it were permitted to him). Nothing was too white, too saintly, or too misty, for his conception of abstract woman. But the practical wants of our nature guide us best. Conversation with Lady Charlotte seemed to strengthen and ripen him. He blushed with pleasure when she said: 'I remember reading your name in the account of that last cavalry charge on the Dewan. You slew a chief, I think. That was creditable, for they are swordmen. Cavalry in Europe can't win much honour —not individual honour, I mean. I suppose being part of a victorious machine is exhilarating. I confess I should not think much of wearing that sort of feather. It 's right to do one's duty, comforting to trample down opposition, and agreeable to shed blood, but when you have matched yourself man to man, and beaten—why, then, I dub you knight.'

Wilfrid bowed, half-laughing, in a luxurious abandonment to his sensations. Possibly because of their rule over him then, the change in him was so instant from flattered delight to vexed perplexity. Rounding one of the rhododendron banks, just as he lifted his head from that acknowledgment of the lady's commendation, he had sight of Emilia with her hand in the hand of Captain Gambier. What could it mean? what right had he to hold her hand? Even if he knew her, what right?

The words between Emilia and Captain Gambier were few.

'Why did I not look at you during dinner?' said he. 'Was it not better to wait till we could meet?'

'Then you will walk with me and talk to me all the evening?'

'No: but I will try and come down here next week and meet you again.'

'Are you going to-night?'

'Yes.'

'To-night? To-night before it strikes a quarter to ten, I am going to leave here alone. If you would come with me! I want a companion. I know they will not hurt me, but I don't like being alone. I have given my promise to sing to some poor people. My friends say I must not go. I must go. I can't break a promise to poor people. And you have never heard me really sing my best. Come with me, and I will.'

Captain Gambier required certain explanations. He saw that a companion and protection would be needed by his curious little friend, and as she was resolved not to break her word, he engaged to take her in the carriage that was to drive him to the station.

'You make me give up an appointment in town,' he said.

'Ah, but you will hear me sing,' returned Emilia. 'We will drive to Brookfield and get my harp, and then to Ipley Common. I am to be sure you will be ready with the carriage at just a quarter to ten?'

The Captain gave her his assurance, and they separated; he to seek out Adela, she to wander about, the calmest of conspirators against the serenity of a household.

Meeting Wilfrid and Lady Charlotte, Emilia was asked by him, who it was she had quitted so abruptly.

'That is the gentleman I told you of. Now I know his name. It is Captain Gambier.'

She was allowed to pass on.

'What is this she says?' Lady Charlotte asked.

'It appears . . . something about a meeting somewhere accidentally, in the park, in London, I think; I really don't know. She had forgotten his name.'

Lady Charlotte spurred him with an interrogative 'Yes?'

'She wanted to remember his name. That 's all. He was kind to her.'

'But, after all,' remonstrated Lady Charlotte, 'that 's only a characteristic of young men, is it not? no special distinction. You are all kind—to girls, to women, to anything!'

Captain Gambier and Adela crossed their path. He spoke a passing word, Lady Charlotte returned no answer, and was silent to her companion for some minutes. Then she said, 'If you feel any responsibility about this little person, take my advice, and don't let her have appointments and meetings. They 're bad in any case, and for a girl who has no brother—has she? no:—well then, you should make the best provision you can against the cowardice of men. Most men are cowards.'

Emilia sang in the drawing-room. Brookfield knew perfectly why she looked indifferent to the plaudits, and was not dissatisfied at hearing Lady Gosstre say that she was a little below the mark. The kindly lady brought Emilia between herself and Mr. Powys, saying, 'I don't intend to let you be the star of the evening and outshine us all.' After which, conversation commenced, and Brookfield had reason to admire her ladyship's practised play upon the social instrument, surely the grandest of all, the chords being men and women. Consider what an accomplishment this is!

Albeit Brookfield knew itself a student at Richford, Adela was of too impatient a wit to refrain from little ventures toward independence, if not rivalry. 'What *we* do,' she uttered distinctively once or twice. Among other things she spoke of 'our discovery,' to attest her declaration that, to wakeful eyes, neither Hillford nor any other place on earth was dull. Cornelia flushed at hearing the name of Mr. Barrett pronounced publicly by her sister.

'An organist an accomplished man!' Lady Gosstre repeated Adela's words. 'Well, I suppose it is possible, but it rather upsets one's notions, does it not?'

'Yes, but agreeably,' said Adela, with boldness; and related how he had been introduced, and hinted that he was going to be patronized.

'The man cannot maintain himself on the income that sort of office brings him,' Lady Gosstre observed.

'Oh, no,' said Adela. 'I fancy he does it simply for some sort of occupation. One cannot help imagining a disguise.'

'Personally I confess to an objection to gentlemen in disguise,' said Lady Gosstre. 'Barrett!—do you know the man?'

She addressed Mr. Powys.

'There used to be good quartett evenings given by the Barretts of Bursey,' he said. 'Sir Justinian Barrett married a Miss Purcell, who subsequently preferred the musical accomplishments of a foreign professor of the Art.'

'Purcell Barrett is his name,' said Adela. 'Our Emilia brought him to us. Where is she? But, where can she be?'

Adela rose.

'She pressed my hand just now,' said Lady Gosstre.

'She was here when Captain Gambier quitted the room,' Arabella remarked.

'Good heaven!'

The exclamation came from Adela.

'Oh, Lady Gosstre! I fear to tell you what I think she has done.'

The scene of the rival Clubs was hurriedly related, together with the preposterous pledge given by Emilia, that she would sing at the Ipley Booth: 'Among those dreadful men!'

'They will treat her respectfully,' said Mr. Powys.

'Worship her, I should imagine, Merthyr,' said Lady Gosstre. 'For all that, she had better be away. Beer is not a respectful spirit.'

'I trust you will pardon her,' Arabella pleaded. 'Everything that explanations of the impropriety of such a thing could do, we have done. We thought that at last we had convinced her. She is quite untamed.'

Mr. Powys now asked where this place was that she had hurried to.

The unhappy ladies of Brookfield, quick as they were to read every sign surrounding them, were for the moment too completely thrown off their balance by Emilia's extraordinary exhibition of will, to see that no reflex of her shameful and hideous proceeding had really fallen upon them. Their exclamations were increasing, until Adela, who had been the noisiest, suddenly adopted Lady Gosstre's tone. 'If she has gone, I suppose she must be simply fetched away.'

'Do you see what has happened?' Lady Charlotte murmured to Wilfrid, between a phrase.

He stumbled over a little piece of gallantry.

'Excellent! But, say those things in French.—Your dark-eyed maid has eloped. She left the room five minutes after Captain Gambier.'

Wilfrid sprang to his feet, looking eagerly to the corners of the room.

'Pardon me,' he said, and moved up to Lady Gosstre. On the way he questioned himself why his heart should be beating at such a pace. Standing at her ladyship's feet, he could scarcely speak.

'Yes, Wilfrid; go after her,' said Adela, divining his object.

'By all means go,' added Lady Gosstre. 'Now she is there, you may as well let her keep her promise; and

then hurry her home. They will saddle you a horse down below, if you care to have one.'

Wilfrid thanked her ladyship, and declined the horse. He was soon walking rapidly under a rough sky in the direction of Ipley, with no firm thought that he would find Emilia there.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH WE SEE THE MAGNANIMITY THAT IS IN BEER

At half-past nine of the clock on the evening of this memorable day, a body of five-and-twenty stout young fellows, prize-winners, wrestlers, boxers, and topers, of the Hillford Club, set forth on a march to Ipley Common.

Now, a foreigner, hearing of their destination and the provocation they had endured, would have supposed that they were bent upon deeds of vengeance; and it requires knowledge of our countrymen to take it as a fact that the idea and aim of the expedition were simply to furnish the offending Ipley boys a little music. Such were the idea and the aim. Hillford had nothing to do with consequences: no more than our England is responsible when she sails out among the empires and hemispheres, saying, 'buy' and 'sell,' and they clamour to be eaten up entire. Foreigners pertinaciously misunderstand us. They have the barbarous habit of judging by results. Let us know ourselves better. It is melancholy to contemplate the intrigues, and vile designs, and vengeances of other nations; and still more so, after we have written so many pages of intelligible history, to see them attributed to us. Will it never be perceived that we do not sow the thing that happens? The source of the flooding stream which

drinks up those rich acres of low flat land is not more innocent than we. If, as does seem possible, we are in a sort of alliance with Destiny, we have signed no compact, and accomplish our work as solidly and merrily as a wood-hatchet in the hands of the woodman. This arrangement to give Ipley a little music, was projected as a return for the favours of the morning: nor have I in my time heard anything comparable to it in charity of sentiment, when I consider the detestable outrage Hillford suffered under.

The parading of the drum, the trombone, a horn, two whistles, and a fife, in front of Hillford booth, caught the fancy of the Clubmen, who roared out parting adjurations that the music was not to be spared; and that Tom Breeks was a musical fellow, with a fine empty pate, if any one of the instruments should fail perchance. They were to give Ipley plenty of music: for Ipley wanted to be taught harmony. Harmony was Ipley's weak point. 'Gie 'em,' said one jolly ruddy Hillford man, 'gie 'em *whack* fol, lol!' And he smacked himself, and set toward an invisible partner. Nor, as recent renowned historians have proved, are observations of this nature beneath the dignity of chronicle. They vindicate, as they localize, the sincerity of Hillford.

Really, to be an islander full of ale, is to be the kindest creature on or off two legs. For that very reason, it may be, his wrath at bad blood is so easily aroused. In our hot moods we would desire things like unto ourselves, and object violently to whatsoever is unlike. And also we desire that the benefits we shed be appreciated. If Ipley understands neither our music nor our intent, haply we must hold a performance on the impenetrable sconce of Ipley.

At the hour named, the expedition, with many a promise that the music should be sweet, departed hilari-

ously: Will Burdock, the left-handed cricketer and hard-hitter, being leader; with Peter Bartholomew, potboy, John Girling, miller's man, and Ned Thewk, gardener's assistant, for lieutenants. On the march, silence was proclaimed, and partially enforced, after two fights against authority. Near the sign of King William's Head, General Burdock called a halt, and betrayed irresolution with reference to the route to be adopted; but as none of his troop could at all share such a condition of mind in the neighbourhood of an inn, he was permitted to debate peacefully with his lieutenants, while the rest burst through the doors and hailed the landlord: a proceeding he was quickly induced to imitate. Thus, when the tail shows strongest decision of purpose, the head must follow.

An accurate oinometer, or method of determining what shall be the condition of the spirit of man according to the degrees of wine or beer in him, were surely of priceless service to us. For now must we, to be certain of our sanity and dignity, abstain, which is to clip, impoverish, imprison the soul: or else, taking wings of wine, we go aloft over capes, and islands, and seas, but are even as balloons that cannot make for any line, and are at the mercy of the winds—without a choice, save to come down by virtue of a collapse. Could we say to ourselves, in the great style, This is the point where desire to embrace humanity is merged in vindictiveness toward individuals: where radiant sweet temper culminates in tremendous wrath: where the treasures of anticipation, waxing riotous, arouse the memory of wrongs: in plain words, could we know positively, and from the hand of science, when we have had enough, we should stop. There is not a doubt that we should stop. It is so true we should stop, that, I am ready to say, ladies have no right to call us horrid names, and complain of us, till

they have helped us to some such trustworthy scientific instrument as this which I have called for. In its absence, I am persuaded that the true natural oinometer is the hat. Were the hat always worn during potation; were ladies when they retire to place it on our heads, or, better still, chaplets of flowers; then, like the wise ancients, we should be able to tell to a nicety how far we had advanced in our dithyramb to the theme of fuddle and muddle. Unhappily the hat does not forewarn: is is simply indicative. I believe, nevertheless, that science might set to work upon it forthwith, and found a system. When you mark men drinking who wear their hats, and those hats are seen gradually beginning to hang on the backs of their heads, as from pegs, in the fashion of a fez, the bald projection of forehead looks jolly and frank: distrust that sign: the may-fly of the soul is then about to be gobbled up by the chub of the passions. A hat worn fez-fashion is a dangerous hat. A hat on the brows shows a man who can take more, but thinks he will go home instead, and does so, peaceably. That is his determination. He may look like Macduff, but he is a lamb. The vinous reverses the non-vinous passionate expression of the hat. If I am discredited, I appeal to history, which tells us that the hats of the Hillford five-and-twenty were all exceedingly hindward-set when the march was resumed. It followed that Peter Bartholomew, potboy, made irritable objections to that old joke which finished his name as though it were a cat calling, and the offence being repeated, he dealt an impartial swing of his stick at divers heads, and told them to take that, which they assured him they had done by sending him flying into a hedge. Peter, being reprimanded by his commanding officer, acknowledged a hot desire to try his mettle, and the latter responsible person had to be restrained from granting the wish he

cherished by John Girling, whom he threw for his trouble: and as Burdock was the soundest hitter, numbers cried out against Girling, revolting him with a sense of overwhelming injustice that could be appeased only by his prostrating two stout lads and squaring against a third, who came up from a cross-road. This one knocked him down with the gentleness of a fist that knows how Beer should be treated, and then sang out, in the voice of Wilfrid Pole: 'Which is the nearest way to Ipley, you fellows?'

'Come along with us, sir, and we 'll show you,' said Burdock.

'Are you going there?'

'Well, that 's pretty clear.'

'Hillford men, are you?'

'We 've left the women behind.'

'I 'm in a hurry, so, good night.'

'And so are we in a hurry, sir. But, you 're a gentleman, and we want to give them chaps at Ipley a little surprise, d 'ye see, in the way of a dollop o' music: and if you won't go givin' 'em warning, you may trot; and that road 'll take you.'

'All right,' said Wilfrid, now fairly divided between his jealousy of Gambier and anxiety for Emilia.

Could her artist nature, of which he had heard perplexing talk, excuse her and make her heart absolutely guiltless (what he called 'innocent'), in trusting herself to any man's honour? I regret to say that the dainty adorers of the sex are even thus grossly suspicious of all women when their sentiment is ever so triflingly offended.

Lights on Ipley Common were seen from a rise of the hilly road. The moon was climbing through drifts of torn black cloud. Hastening his pace, for a double reason now, Wilfrid had the booth within hearing, listened a moment; and then stood fast. His unconscious gasp

of the words: 'Thank God; there she is!' might have betrayed him to another.

She was sitting near one end of the booth, singing as Wilfrid had never yet heard her sing: her dark eyes flashing. Behind her stood Captain Gambier, keeping guard with all the composure of a gentleman-usher at a royal presentation. Along the tables, men and women were ranged facing her; open-mouthed, some of them: but for the most part wearing a predetermined expression of applausive judgement, as who should say, 'Queer, but good.' They gave Emilia their faces, which was all she wanted! and silence, save for an intermingling soft snore, here and there, the elfin trumpet of silence. To tell truth, certain heads had bowed low to the majesty of beer, and were down on the table between sprawling doubled arms. No essay on the power of beer could exhibit it more convincingly than the happy indifference with which they received admonishing blows from quart-pots, salutes from hot pipe-bowls, pricks from pipe-ends, on nose, and cheek, and pate; as if to vindicate for their beloved beverage a right to rank with that old classic drink wherewith the fairest of women vanquished human ills. The majority, however, had been snatched out of this bliss by the intrusion of their wives, who sat beside them like Consciences in petticoats; and it must be said that Emilia was in favour with the married men, for one reason, because she gave these broad-ribboned ladies a good excuse for allowing their lords to stop where they were so comfortable, a continually-extending five minutes longer.

Yet, though the words were foreign and the style of the song and the singer were strange, many of the older fellows' eyes twinkled, and their mouths pursed with a kind of half-protesting pleasure. All were reverent to the compliment paid them by Emilia's presence. The general

expression was much like that seen when the popular ear is given to the national anthem. Wilfrid hung at the opening of the booth, a cynical spectator. For what on earth made her throw such energy, and glory of music, into a song before fellows like these? He laughed dolorously. 'She hasn't a particle of any sense of ridicule,' he said to himself. Forthwith her voice took hold of him, and led him as heroes of old were led unwillingly into enchanted woods. If she had been singing things holy, a hymn, a hallelujah, in this company, it struck him that somehow it would have seemed appropriate; not objectionable; at any rate, not ridiculous. Dr. Watts would have put a girdle about her; but a song of romance sung in this atmosphere of pipes and beer and boozy heads, chagrined Wilfrid in proportion as the softer half of him began to succumb to the deliciousness of her voice.

Emilia may have had some warning sense that admiration is only one ingredient of homage, that to make it fast and true affection must be won. Now, poor people, yokels, clods, cannot love what is incomprehensible to them. An idol must have their attributes: a king must show his face now and then: a song must appeal to their intelligence, to subdue them quite. This, as we know, is not the case in the higher circles. Emilia may have divined it: possibly from the very great respect with which her finale was greeted. Vigorous as the 'Brayvos' were, they sounded abashed: they lacked abandonment. In fact, it was gratitude that applauded, and not enthusiasm. 'Hillford don't hear stuff like that, do 'em?' which was the main verbal encomium passed, may be taken testificatorily as to this point.

'Dame! dame!' cried Emilia, finding her way quickly to one of the more decently-bonneted women; 'am I not glad to see you here! Did I please you? And you, dear

Farmer Wilson? I caught sight of you just as I was finishing. I remember the song you like, and I want to sing it. I know the tune, but the words! the words! what are the words? Humming won't do.'

'Ah, now!' quoth Farmer Wilson, pointing out the end of his pipe, 'that 's what they 'll swallow down; that 's the song to make 'em kick. Sing that, miss. Furrin songs 's all right enough; but "Ale it is my tipple, and England is my nation!" Let 's have something plain and flat on the surface, miss.'

Dame Wilson jogged her husband's arm, to make him remember that talking was his dangerous pastime, and sent abroad a petition for a song-book; and after a space a very doggy-eared book, resembling a poodle of that genus, was handed to her. Then uprose a shout for this song and that; but Emilia fixed upon the one she had in view, and walked back to her harp, with her head bent, perusing it attentively all the way. There, she gave the book to Captain Gambier, and begged him to hold it open before her, with a passing light of eyes likely to be rather disturbing to a jealous spectator. The Captain seized the book without wincing, and displayed a remarkable equanimity of countenance as he held it out, according to direction. No sooner had Emilia struck a prelude of the well-known air, than the interior of the booth was transfigured; legs began to move, elbows jerked upward, fingers fillipped: the whole body of them were ready to duck and bow, dance, and do her bidding: she had fairly caught their hearts. For, besides the pleasure they had in their own familiar tune, it was wonderful to them that Emilia should know what they knew. This was the marvel, this the inspiration. She smiled to see how true she had struck, and seemed to swim on the pleasure she excited. Once, as her voice dropped, she looked up at Captain Gambier, so very

archly, with the curving line of her bare throat, that Wilfrid was dragged down from his cynical observatory, and made to feel as a common man among them all.

At the 'thrum-thrum' on the harp-strings, which wound up the song, frenzied shouts were raised for a repetition. Emilia was perfectly willing to gratify them; Captain Gambier appeared to be remonstrating with her, but she put up her joined hands, mock-petitioningly, and he with great affability held out the book anew. Wilfrid was thinking of moving to her to take her forcibly away when she recommenced.

At the same instant—but who, knowing that a house of glass is about to be shattered, can refrain from admiring its glitter in the beams?—Ipley crooned a ready accompaniment: the sleepers had been awakened: the women and the men were alive, half-dancing, half-chorusing: here a baby was tossed, and there an old fellow's elbow worked mutely, expressive of the rollicking gaiety within him: the whole length of the booth was in a pleasing simmer, ready to overboil with shouts humane and cheerful, while Emilia pitched her note and led; archly, and quite one with them all, and yet in a way that critical Wilfrid could not object to, so plainly did she sing to give happiness.

I cannot delay; but I request you, that are here privileged to soar aloft with the Muse, to fix your minds upon one point in this flight. Let not the heat and dust of the ensuing fray divert your attention from the magnanimity of Beer. It will be vindicated in the end: but be worthy of your seat beside the Muse, who alone of us all can take one view of the inevitable two that perplex mortal judgements.

For, if Ipley had jumped jovially up, and met the Hillford alarum with laughter,—how then? Why, then

I maintain that the magnanimity of Beer would have blazed effulgent on the spot: there would have been louder laughter and fraternal greetings. As it was, the fire on the altar of Wisdom was again kindled by Folly, and the steps to the altar were broken heads, after the antique fashion.

In dismay, Ipley started. The members of the Club stared. Emilia faltered in horror.

A moment her voice swam stemming the execrable concert, but it was overwhelmed. Wilfrid pressed forward to her. They could hear nothing but the din. The booth raged like an insurgent menagerie. Outside it sounded of brazen beasts, and beasts that whistled, beasts that boomed. A whirlwind huddled them, and at last a cry, 'We 've got a visit from Hillford,' told a tale. At once the stoutest hearts pressed to the opening. 'My harp!' Emilia made her voice reach Wilfrid's ear. Unprovided with weapons, Ipley parleyed. Hillford howled in reply. The trombone brayed an interminable note, that would have driven to madness quiescent cats by steaming kettles, and quick, like the springing pulse of battle, the drum thumped and thumped. Blood could not hear it and keep from boiling. The booth shook violently. Wilfrid and Gambier threw over half-a-dozen chairs, forms, and tables, to make a barrier for the protection of the women.

'Come,' Wilfrid said to Emilia, 'leave the harp, I will get you another. Come.'

'No, no,' she cried in her nervous fright.

'For God's sake, come!' he reiterated, she, stamping her foot, as to emphasize 'No! no! no!'

'But I will buy you another harp'; he made audible to her through the hubbub.

'This one!' she gasped with her hand on it. 'What will he think if he finds that I forsook it?'

Wilfrid knew her to allude to the unknown person who had given it to her.

'There—there,' said he. 'I sent it, and I can get you another. So, come. Be good, and come.'

'It was you!'

Emilia looked at him. She seemed to have no senses for the uproar about her.

But now the outer barricade was broken through, and the rout pressed on the second line. Tom Breeks, the orator, and Jim, transformed from a lurching yokel to a lithe dog of battle, kept the retreat of Ipley, challenging any two of Hillford to settle the dispute. Captain Gambier attempted an authoritative parley, in the midst of which a Hillford man made a long arm and struck Emilia's harp, till the strings jarred loose and horrid. The noise would have been enough to irritate Wilfrid beyond endurance. When he saw the fellow continuing to strike the harp-frame while Emilia clutched it, in a feeble defence, against her bosom, he caught a thick stick from a neighbouring hand and knocked that Hillford man so clean to earth that Hillford murmured at the blow. Wilfrid then joined the front array.

'Half-a-dozen hits like that a-piece, sir,' nodded Tom Breeks.

'There goes another!' Jim shouted.

'Not quite, my lad,' interposed Ned Thewk, though Peter Bartholomew was reeling in confirmation.

His blow at Jim missed, but came sharply in the swing on Wilfrid's cheek-bone.

Maddened at the immediate vision of that feature swollen, purple, even as a plum with an assiduous fly on it, certifying to ripeness:—Says the philosopher, 'We are never up to the mark of any position, if we are in a position beneath our own mark'; and it is true that no hero in conflict should think of his face, but

Wilfrid was all the while protesting wrathfully against the folly of his having set foot in such a place:—Maddened, I say, Wilfrid, a keen swordman, cleared a space. John Girling fell to him: Ned Thewk fell to him, and the sconce of Will Burdock rang.

'A rascally absurd business!' said Gambier, letting his stick do the part of a damnatory verb on one of the enemy, while he added, 'The drunken vagabonds!'

All the Hillford party were now in the booth. Ipley, meantime, was not sleeping. Farmer Wilson and a set of the Ipley men whom age had sagaciously instructed to prefer stratagem to force, had slipped outside, and were labouring as busily as their comrades within: stooping to the tent-pegs, sending emissaries to the tent-poles.

'Drunk!' roared Will Burdock. 'Did you happen to say "drunk"?' And looking all the while at Gambier, he, with infernal cunning, swung at Wilfrid's fated cheek-bone. The latter rushed furiously into the press of them, and there was a charge from Ipley, and a lock, from which Wilfrid extricated himself to hurry off Emilia. He perceived that bad blood was boiling up.

'Forward!' cried Will Burdock, and Hillford in turn made a tide.

As they came on in numbers too great for Ipley to stand against, an obscuration fell over all. The fight paused. Then a sensation as of some fellows smoothing their polls and their cheeks, and leaning on their shoulders with obtrusive affection, inspirited them to lash about indiscriminately. Whoops and yells arose; then peals of laughter. Homage to the cleverness of Ipley was paid in hurrahs, the moment Hillford understood the stratagem by which its men of valour were lamed and imprisoned. The truth was, that the booth was down on them, and they were struggling entangled in an enormous bag of canvas.

Wilfrid drew Emilia from under the drooping folds of

the tent. He was allowed, on inspection of features, to pass. The men of Hillford were captured one by one like wild geese, as with difficulty they emerged, roaring, rolling with laughter, all.

Yea; to such an extent did they laugh that they can scarce be said to have done less than make the joke of the foe their own. And this proves the great and amazing magnanimity of Beer.

CHAPTER XII

SHOWING HOW SENTIMENT AND PASSION TAKE THE DISEASE OF LOVE

A PILLAR of dim silver rain fronted the moon on the hills. Emilia walked hurriedly, with her head bent, like a penitent: now and then peeping up and breathing to the keen scent of the tender ferns. Wilfrid still grasped her hand, and led her across the common, away from the rout.

When the uproar behind them had sunk, he said: 'You 'll get your feet wet. I 'm sorry you should have to walk. How did you come here?'

She answered: 'I forget.'

'You must have come here in some conveyance. Did you walk?'

Again she answered: 'I forget'; a little querulously; perhaps wilfully.

'Well!' he persisted: 'You must have got your harp to this place by some means or other?'

'Yes, my harp!' a sob checked her voice.

Wilfrid tried to soothe her. 'Never mind the harp. It 's easily replaced.'

'Not that one!' she moaned.

'We will get you another.'

'I shall never love any but that.'

'Perhaps we may hear good news of it to-morrow.'

'No; for I felt it die in my hands. The third blow was the one that killed it. It 's broken.'

Wilfrid could not reproach her, and he had not any desire to preach. So, as no idea of having done amiss in coming to the booth to sing illumined her, and she yet knew that she was in some way guilty, she accused herself of disregard for that dear harp while it was brilliant and serviceable. 'Now I remember what poor music I made of it! I touched it with cold fingers. The sound was thin, as if it had no heart. Tick-tick!—I fancy I touched it with a dead man's finger-nails.'

She crossed her wrists tight at the clasp of her waist, and letting her chin fall on her throat, shook her body fretfully, much as a pettish little girl might do. Wilfrid grimaced. 'Tick-tick' was not a pathetic elegy in his ears.

'The only thing is, not to think about it,' said he. 'It 's only an instrument, after all.'

'It 's the second one I 've seen killed like a living creature,' replied Emilia.

They walked on silently, till Wilfrid remarked, that he wondered where Gambier was. She gave no heed to the name. The little quiet footing and the bowed head by his side, moved him to entreat her not to be unhappy. Her voice had another tone when she answered that she was not unhappy.

'No tears at all?' Wilfrid stooped to get a close view of her face. 'I thought I saw one. If it 's about the harp, look!—you shall go into that cottage where the light is, sit there, and wait for me, and I will bring you what remains of it. I dare say we can have it mended.'

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Emilia lifted her eyes. 'I am not crying for the harp. If you go back I must go with you.'

'That 's out of the question. You must never be found in that sort of place again.'

'Let us leave the harp,' she murmured. 'You cannot go without me. Let me sit here for a minute. Sit with me.'

She pointed to a place beside herself on the fork of a dry log under flowering hawthorn. A pale shadowy blue centre of light among the clouds told where the moon was. Rain had ceased, and the refreshed earth smelt all of flowers, as if each breeze going by held a nosegay to their nostrils.

Wilfrid was sensible of a sudden marked change in her. His blood was quicker than his brain in feeling it. Her voice now, even in common speaking, had that vibrating richness which in her singing swept his nerves.

'If you cry, there must be a cause, you know,' he said, for the sake of keeping the conversation in a safe channel.

'How brave you are!' was Emilia's sedate exclamation, in reply.

Her cheeks glowed, as if she had just uttered a great confession, but while the colour mounted to her eyes, they kept their affectionate intentness upon him without a quiver of the lids.

'Do you think me a coward?' she relieved him by asking sharply, like one whom the thought had turned into a darker path. 'I am not. I hung my head while you were fighting, because, what could I do? I would not have left you. Girls can only say, "I will perish with him."'

'But,' Wilfrid tried to laugh, 'there was no necessity for that sort of devotion. What are you thinking of? It was half in good-humour, all through. Part of their fun!'

Clearly Emilia's conception of the recent fray was unchangeable.

'And the place for girls is at home; that 's certain,' he added.

'I should always like to be where . . .' Her voice flowed on with singular gravity to that stop.

Wilfrid's hand travelled mechanically to his pricking cheek-bone.

Was it possible that a love-scene was coming on as a pendant to that monstrously ridiculous affair of half-an-hour back? To know that she had sufficient sensibility was gratifying, and flattering that it aimed at him. She was really a darling little woman: only too absurd! Had she been on the point of saying that she would always like to be where he, Wilfrid, was? An odd touch of curiosity, peculiar to the languid emotions, made him ask her this: and to her soft 'Yes,' he continued briskly, and in the style of condescending fellowship: 'Of course we 're not going to part!'

'I wonder,' said Emilia.

There she sat, evidently sounding right through the future with her young brain, to hear what Destiny might have to say.

The 'I wonder' rang sweetly in his head. It was as delicate a way of confessing, 'I love you with all my soul,' as could be imagined. Extremely refined young ladies could hardly have improved upon it, saving with the angelic shades of sentiment familiar to them.

Convinced that he had now heard enough for his vanity, Wilfrid returned emphatically to the tone of the world's highroad.

'By the way,' he said, 'you mustn't have any exaggerated idea of this night's work. Remember, also, I have to share the honours with Captain Gambier.'

'I did not see him,' said Emilia.

'Are you not cold?' he asked, for a diversion, though he had one of her hands.

She gave him the other.

He could not quit them abruptly: nor could he hold both without being drawn to her.

'What is it you say?' Wilfrid whispered: '"men kiss us when we are happy." Is that right? and are you happy?'

She lifted a clear full face, to which he bent his mouth. Over the flowering hawthorn the moon stood like a wind-blown white rose of the heavens. The kiss was given and taken. Strange to tell, it was he who drew away from it almost bashfully, and with new feelings.

Quite unaware that he played the feminine part, Wilfrid alluded to her flight from Richford, with the instinct to sting his heart by a revival of his jealous sensations previously experienced, and so taste the luxury of present satisfaction.

'Why did you run away from me?' he said, semi-reproachfully.

'I promised.'

'Would you not break a promise to stay with me?'

'Now I would!'

'You promised Captain Gambier?'

'No: those poor people.'

'You are sorry that you went?'

No: she was happy.

'You have lost your harp by it,' said Wilfrid.

'What do you think of me for not guessing—not knowing who sent it?' she returned. 'I feel guilty of something all those days that I touched it, not thinking of you. Wicked, filthy little creature that I was! I despise ungrateful girls.'

'I detest anything that has to do with gratitude,'

Wilfrid appended, 'pray give me none. Why did you go away with Captain Gambier?'

'I was very fond of him,' she replied unhesitatingly, but speaking as it were with numbed lips. 'I wanted to tell him, to thank him and hold his hand. I told him of my promise. He spoke to me a moment in the garden, you know. He said he was leaving to go to London early, and would wait for me in the carriage: then we might talk. He did not wish to talk to me in the garden.'

'And you went with him in the carriage, and told him you were so grateful?'

'Yes; but men do not like us to be grateful.'

'So, he said he would do all sorts of things on condition that you were not grateful?'

'He said—yes:—I forget: I do forget! How can I tell what he said?' Emilia added piteously. 'I feel as if I had been emptied out of a sack!'

Wilfrid was pierced with laughter; and then the plain-spoken simile gave him a chilling sensation while he was rising to the jealous pitch.

'Did he talk about taking you to Italy? Put your head into the sack, and think!'

'Yes,' she answered blandly, an affirmative that caused him some astonishment, for he had struck at once to the farthest end of his suspicions.

'He feels as I do about the Italian Schools,' said Emilia. 'He wishes me to owe my learning to *him*. He says it will make him happy, and I thought so too.' She threw in a 'then.'

Wilfrid looked moodily into the opposite hedge.

'Did he name the day for your going?' he asked presently, little anticipating another 'Yes': but it came: and her rather faltering manner showed her to be conscious too that the word was getting to be a black one to him.

'Did you say you would go?'

'I did.'

Question and answer crossed like two rapiers.

Wilfrid jumped up.

'The smell of this tree 's detestable,' he said, glancing at the shadowing hawthorn.

Emilia rose quietly, plucked a flower off the tree, and put it in her bosom.

Their way was down a green lane and across long meadow-paths dim in the moonlight. A nightingale was heard on this side and on that. Overhead they had a great space of sky with broken cloud full of the glory of the moon. The meadows dipped to a brook, slenderly spanned by a plank. Then there was an ascent through a cornfield to a copse. Rounding this they had sight of Brookfield. But while they were yet at the brook, Wilfrid said, 'When is it you 're going to Italy?'

In return he had an eager look, so that he was half-ashamed to add, 'With Captain Gambier, I mean.' He was suffering, and by being brutal he expected to draw balm on himself; nor was he deceived.

Emilia just then gave him her hand to be led over, and answered, as she neared him, 'I am never to leave *you*.'

'You never shall!' Wilfrid caught her in his arms, quite conquered by her, proud of her. He reflected with a loving rapture that her manner at that moment was equal to any lady's; and the phantom of her with her hand out, and her frank look, and trustful footing, while she spoke those words, kept on advancing to him all the way to Brookfield, at the same time that the sober reality murmured at his elbow.

Love, with his accustomed cunning, managed thus to lift her out of the mire and array her in his golden dress: to idealize her, as we say. Reconciled for the hour were

the contesting instincts in the nature of this youth: the adoration of feminine refinement and the susceptibility to sensuous impressions. But Emilia walked with a hero: the dream of all her days! one, generous and gentle, as well as brave: who had fought for her, had thought of her tenderly, was with her now, having raised her to his level with a touch! How much might they not accomplish together: he with sword, she with harp? Through shadowy alleys in the clouds, Emilia saw the bright Italian plains opening out to her: the cities of marble, such as her imagination had fashioned them, porticos of stately palaces, and towers, and statues white among cypresses; and farther, minutely-radiant in the vista as a shining star, Venice of the sea. Fancy made the flying minutes hours. Now they marched with the regiments of Italy, under the folds of her free banner; now she sang to the victorious army, waving the banner over them; and now she floated in a gondola, and turning to him, the dear home of her heart, yet pale with the bleeding of his wound for Italy, said softly, in the tone that had power with him, 'Only let me please you!'

'When? Where? What with?' came the blunt response from England, with electric speed, and Emilia fell from the clouds.

'I meant my singing; I thought of how I sang to you. Oh, happy time!' she exclaimed, to cut through the mist of vision in her mind.

'To me? down at the booth?' muttered Wilfrid, perplexed.

'Oh, no! I mean, just now——' and languid with the burden of so full a heart, she did not attempt to explain herself further, though he said, invitingly, 'I thought I heard you humming?'

Then he was seized with a desire to have the force of

her spirit upon him, for Brookfield was in view; and with the sight of Brookfield, the natural fascination waxed a shade fainter, and he feared it might be going. This (he was happily as ignorant as any other youth of the working of his machinery) prompted him to bid her sing before they parted. Emilia checked her steps at once to do as he desired. Her throat filled, but the voice quavered down again, like a fainting creature sick unto death. She made another effort and ended with a sorrowful look at his narrowly-watching eyes.

'I can't,' she said; and, in fear of his anger, took his hand to beg forgiveness, while her eyelids drooped.

Wilfrid locked her fingers in a strong pressure, and walked on, silent as a man who has faced one of the veiled mysteries of life. It struck a full human blow on his heart, dragging him out of his sentimental pastures precipitately. He felt her fainting voice to be the intensest love-cry that could be uttered. The sound of it coursed through his blood, striking a rare illumination of sparks in his not commonly brilliant brain. In truth, that little episode showed an image of nature weak with the burden of new love. I do not charge the young cavalry officer with the power of perceiving images. He saw no more than that she could not sing because of what was in her heart toward him; but such a physical revelation was a divine love-confession, coming involuntarily from one whose lips had not formed the name of love; and Wilfrid felt it so deeply, that the exquisite flattery was almost lost, in a certain awed sense of his being in the presence of an absolute fact: a thing real, though it was much talked about, and visible, though it did not wear a hat or a petticoat.

It searched him thoroughly enough to keep him from any further pledges in that direction, propitious as the moment was, while the moon slipped over banks of

marble into fields of blue, and all the midnight promised silence. They passed quickly through the laurel shrubs, and round the lawn. Lights were in the sleepless ladies' bed-room windows.

'Do I love her?' thought Wilfrid, as he was about to pull at the bell, and the thought that he should feel pain at being separated from her for half-a-dozen hours, persuaded him that he did. The self-restraint which withheld him from protesting that he did, confirmed it.

'To-morrow morning,' he whispered.

'I shall be down by daylight,' answered Emilia.

'You are in the shade—I cannot see you,' said he.

The door opened as Emilia was moving out of the line of shadow

CHAPTER XIII

CONTAINS A SHORT DISCOURSE ON PUPPETS

On the morrow Wilfrid was gone. No one had seen him go. Emilia, while she touched the keys of a muted piano softly in the morning quiet of the house, had heard the front-door close. At that hour one attributes every noise to the servants. She played on and waited patiently, till the housemaid expelled her into the dewy air.

The report from his bedchamber, telling the ladies of his absence, added that he had taken linen for a lengthened journey.

This curious retreat of my hero belongs to the order of things that are done 'None know why'; a curtain which drops conveniently upon either the bewilderment of the showman or the infirmities of the puppet.

I must own (though I need not be told what odium

frowns on such a pretension to excess of cleverness) that I do know why. I know why, and, unfortunately for me, I have to tell what I know. If I do not tell, this narrative is so constituted that there will be no moral to it.

One who studies man in puppets (in which purpose lies the chief value of this amusing species), must think that we are degenerating rapidly. The puppet hero, for instance, is a changed being. We know what he was; but now he takes shelter in his wits. His organs affect his destiny. Careless of the fact that the hero's achievement is to conquer nature, he seems rather to boast of his subservience to her.

Still, up to this day, the fixture of a nose upon the puppet-hero's frontispiece has not been attempted. Some one does it at last. When the alternative came: 'No nose to the hero, no moral to the tale'; could there be hesitation?

And I would warn our sentimentalists to admit the nose among the features proper to heroes, otherwise the race will become extinct. There is already an amount of dropping of the curtain that is positively wearisome, even to extremely refined persons, in order to save him from apparent misconduct. He will have to go altogether, unless we boldly figure him as other men. Manifestly the moment his career as a fairy prince was at end, he was on the high road to a nose. The beneficent Power that discriminated for him having vanished utterly, he was, like a bankrupt gentleman, obliged to do all the work for himself. This is nothing more than the tendency of the generations downward from the ideal.

The springs that moved Wilfrid upon the present occasion were simple. We will strip him of his heroic trappings for one fleeting instant, and show them.

Jumping briskly from a restless bed, his first act was

to address his features to the looking-glass: and he saw surely the most glorious sight for a hero of the knightly age that could possibly have been offered. The battle of the previous night was written there in one eloquent big lump, which would have passed him current as hero from end to end of the land in the great days of old. These are the tea-table days. His preference was for the visage of Wilfrid Pole, which he saw not. At the aspect of the fearful mask, this young man stared, and then cursed; and then, by an odd transition, he was reminded, as by the force of a sudden gust, that Emilia's hair was redolent of pipe-smoke.

His remark was, 'I can't be seen in this state.' His thought (a dim reminiscence of poetical readings): 'Ambrosial locks indeed!' A sad irony, which told that much gold-leaf had peeled away from her image in his heart.

Wilfrid was a gallant fellow, with good stuff in him. But, he was young. Ponder on that pregnant word, for you are about to see him grow. He was less a coxcomb than shamefaced and sentimental; and one may have these qualities, and be a coxcomb to boot, and yet be a gallant fellow. One may also be a gallant fellow, and harsh, exacting, double-dealing, and I know not what besides, in youth. The question asked by nature is, 'Has he the heart to take and keep an impression?' For, if he has, circumstances will force him on and carve the figure of a brave man out of that mass of contradictions. In return for such benefits, he pays forfeit commonly of the dearest of the things prized by him in this terrestrial life. Whereat, albeit created man by her, he reproaches nature, and the sculptor, circumstance; forgetting that to make him man is their sole duty, and that what betrayed him was the difficulty thrown in their way by his quondam self—the pleasant boonfellow!

He forgets, in fact, that he was formerly led by his nose, and sacrificed his deeper feeling to a low disgust.

When the youth is called upon to look up, he can adore devoutly and ardently; but when it is his chance to look down on a fair head, he is, if not worse, a sentimental despot.

Wilfrid was young, and under the dominion of his senses; which can be, if the sentimentalists will believe me, as tyrannous and misleading when super-refined as when ultra-bestial. He made a good stout effort to resist the pipe-smoke. Emilia's voice, her growing beauty, her simplicity, her peculiar charms of feature, were all conjured up to combat the dismal images suggested by that fatal, dragging-down smell. It was vain. Horrible pipe-smoke pervaded the memory of her. It seemed to his offended dainty fancy that he could never dissociate her from smoking-booths and abominably bad tobacco; and, let us add (for this was part of the secret), that it never could dwell on her without the companionship of a hideous disfigured countenance, claiming to be Wilfrid Pole. He shuddered to think that he had virtually almost engaged himself to this girl. Or, had he? Was his honour bound? Distance appeared to answer the question favourably. There was safety in being distant from her. She possessed an incomprehensible attractiveness. She was at once powerful and pitiable: so that while he feared her, and was running from her spell, he said, from time to time, 'Poor little thing!' and deeply hoped she would not be unhappy.

A showman once (a novice in his art, or ambitious beyond the mark), after a successful exhibition of his dolls, handed them to the company, with the observation, 'Satisfy yourselves, ladies and gentlemen.' The latter, having satisfied themselves that the capacity of the lower

limbs was extraordinary, returned them, disenchanted. That showman did ill. But I am not imitating him. I do not wait till after the performance, when it is too late to revive illusion. To avoid having to drop the curtain, I choose to explain an act on which the story hinges, while it is advancing: which is, in truth, an impulse of character. Instead of his being more of a puppet, this hero is less wooden than he was. Certainly I am much more in awe of him.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BESWORTH QUESTION

Mr. Pole was one of those men whose characters are read off at a glance. He was neat, insignificant, and nervously cheerful; with the eyes of a bird, that let you into no interior. His friends knew him thoroughly. His daughters were never in doubt about him. At the period of the purchase of Brookfield he had been excitable and feverish, but that was ascribed to the projected change in his habits, and the stern necessity for an occasional family intercommunication on the subject of money. He had a remarkable shyness of this theme, and reversed its general treatment; for he would pay, but would not talk of it. If it had to be discussed with the ladies, he puffed, and blinked, and looked so much like a culprit that, though they rather admired him for what seemed to them the germ of a sense delicate above his condition, they would have said of any man they had not known so perfectly, that he had painful reasons for wishing to avoid it. Now that they spoke to him of Besworth, assuring him that they were serious in their

desire to change their residence, the fit of shyness was manifested, first in outrageous praise of Brookfield, which was speedily and inexplicably followed by a sort of implied assent to the proposition to depart from it. For Besworth displayed numerous advantages over Brookfield, and to contest one was to plunge headlong into the money question. He ventured to ask his daughters what good they expected from the change. They replied that it was simply this: that one might live fifty years at Brookfield and not get such a circle as in two might be established at Besworth. They were restricted. They had gathering friends, and no means of bringing them together. And the beauty of the site of Besworth made them enthusiastic.

'Well, but,' said Mr. Pole: 'what does it lead to? Is there nothing to come after?'

He explained: 'You 're girls, you know. You won't always stop with me. You may do just as well at Brookfield for yourselves, as over there.'

The ladies blushed demurely.

'You forecast very kindly for us, papa,' said Cornelia. 'Our object is entirely different.'

'I wish I could see it,' he returned.

'But, you do see, papa, you do see,' interposed Adela, 'that a select life is preferable to that higgledy-piggledy city-square existence so many poor creatures are condemned to!'

'Select!' said Mr. Pole, thinking that he had hit upon a weakness in their argument; 'how can it be select when you want to go to a place where you may have a crowd about you?'

'Selection can only be made *from* a crowd,' remarked Arabella, with terrible placidity. 'It is where we see few that we are at the mercy of kind fortune for our acquaintances.'

'Don't you see, papa, that the difference between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie is, that the former choose their sets, and the latter are obliged to take what comes to them?' said Adela.

This was the first domestic discussion upon Besworth. The visit to Richford had produced the usual effect on the ladies, who were now looking to other heights from that level. The ladies said: 'We have only to press it with papa, and we shall quit this place.' But at the second discussion they found that they had not advanced. The only change was in the emphasis that their father added to the interrogations already uttered. 'What does it lead *to*? What 's to come *after*? I see your object. But, am I to go into a new house for the sake of getting you out of it, and then be left there alone? It 's against your interests, too. Never mind how. Leave that to a business man. If your brother had proposed it . . . but he 's too reasonable.'

The ladies, upon this hint, wrote to Wilfrid to obtain his concurrence and assistance. He laughed when he read the simple sentence: 'We hope you will not fancy that we have any peculiar personal interest in view'; and replied to them that he was sure they had none: that he looked upon Besworth with favour, 'and I may inform you,' he pursued, 'that your taste is heartily applauded by Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, she bids me tell you.' The letter was dated from Stornley, the estate of the marquis, Lady Charlotte's father. Her ladyship's brother was a member of Wilfrid's Club. 'He calls Besworth the most habitable place in the county, and promises to be there as many months out of the twelve as you like to have him. I agree with him that Stornley can't hold a candle to it. There are three residences in England that might be preferred to it, and, of those, two are ducal.'

The letter was a piece of that easy diplomacy which comes from habit. The 'of those, two are ducal,' was masterly. It affected the imagination of Brookfield. 'Which two?' And could Besworth be brought to rival *them*? Ultimately, it might be! The neighbourhood to London, too, gave it noble advantages. Rapid relays of guests, and a metropolitan reputation for country attractions, would distinguish Besworth above most English houses. A house where all the chief celebrities might be encountered: a house under suave feminine rule; a house, a home, to a chosen set, and a refreshing fountain to a widening circle!

'We have a dispute,' they wrote playfully to Wilfrid, 'a dispute we wish you or Lady Charlotte to settle. I, Arabella, know nothing of trout. I, Cornelia, know nothing of river-beds. I, Adela, know nothing of engineering. But, we are persuaded, the latter, that the river running for a mile through Besworth grounds may be deepened: we are persuaded, the intermediate, that the attempt will damage the channel: we are persuaded, the first, that all the fish will go.'

In reply, Wilfrid appeared to have taken them in earnest. 'I rode over yesterday with Lady Charlotte,' he said. 'We think something might be done, without at all endangering the fish or spoiling the channel. At all events, the idea of making the mile of broad water serviceable for boats is too good to give up in a hurry. How about the dining-hall? I told Lady Charlotte you were sure to insist upon a balcony for musicians. She laughed. You will like her when you know her.'

Thus the ladies of Brookfield were led on to be more serious concerning Besworth than they had thought of being, and began to feel that their honour was pledged to purchase this surpassing family seat. In a household where every want is supplied, and money as a topic

utterly banished, it is not surprising that they should have had imperial views.

Adela was Wilfrid's favoured correspondent. She described to him gaily the struggle with their papa. 'But, if you care for Besworth, you may calculate on it. —Or is it only for our sakes, as I sometimes think?— Besworth is won. Nothing but the cost of the place (to be considered you know!) could withhold it from us; and of that papa has not uttered a syllable, though he conjures up every possible objection to a change of abode, and will not (perhaps, poor dear, cannot) see what we intend doing in the world. Now, you know that rich men *invariably* make the question of the cost their first and loudest outcry. I know that to be the case. They call it their blood. Papa seems indifferent to this part of the affair. He does not even allude to it. Still, we do not progress. It is just possible that the Tinleys have an eye on beautiful Besworth. Their own place is bad enough, but good enough for them. Give them Besworth, and they will sit upon the neighbourhood. We shall be invaded by everything that is mean and low, and a *great chance* will be gone for us. I think I may say, for the county. The country? Our advice is, that you write to papa one of your cleverest letters. We know, darling, what you can do with the pen as well as the sword. Write word that you have written.'

Wilfrid's reply stated that he considered it unadviseable that he should add his voice to the request, for the present.

The ladies submitted to this quietly until they heard from their father one evening at dinner that he had seen Wilfrid in the city.

'He doesn't waste his time like some young people I know,' said Mr. Pole, with a wink.

'Papa; is it possible?' cried Adela.

'Everything 's possible, my dear.'

'Lady Charlotte?'

'There is a Lady Charlotte.'

'Who would be Lady Charlotte still, whatever occurred!'

Mr. Pole laughed. 'No, no. You get nothing out of me. All I say is, be practical. The sun isn't always shining.'

He appeared to be elated with some secret good news.

'Have you been over to Besworth, the last two or three days?' he asked.

The ladies smiled radiantly, acknowledging Wilfrid's wonderful persuasive powers, in their hearts.

'No, papa; we have not been,' said Adela. 'We are always anxious to go, as I think you know.'

The merchant chirped over his glass. 'Well, well! There 's a way.'

'Straight?'

'Over a gate; ha, ha!'

His gaiety would have been perplexing, but for the allusion to Lady Charlotte.

The sisters, in their unfailing midnight consultation, persuaded one another that Wilfrid had become engaged to that lady. They wrote forthwith Fine Shades to him on the subject. His answer was Bœotian, and all about Besworth. 'Press it now,' he said, 'if you really want it. The iron is hot. And above all things, let me beg you not to be inconsiderate to the squire, when he and I are doing all we can for you. I mean, we are bound to consider him, if there should happen to be anything he wishes us to do.'

What could the word 'inconsiderate' imply? The ladies were unable to summon an idea to solve it. They were sure that no daughters could be more perfectly

considerate and ready to sacrifice everything to their father. In the end, they deputed the volunteering Adela to sit with him in the library, and put the question of Besworth decisively, in the name of all. They, meantime, who had a contempt for sleep, waited aloft to hold debate over the result of the interview.

An hour after midnight, Adela came to them, looking pale and uncertain: her curls seeming to drip, and her blue eyes wandering about the room, as if she had seen a thing that kept her in a quiver between belief and doubt.

The two ladies drew near to her, expressing no verbal impatience, from which the habit of government and great views naturally saved them, but singularly curious.

Adela's first exclamation: 'I wish I had not gone,' alarmed them.

'Has any change come to papa?' breathed Arabella.

Cornelia smiled. 'Do you not know him too well?'

An acute glance from Adela made her ask whether Besworth was to be surrendered.

'Oh, no! my dear. We may have Besworth.'

'Then, surely!'

'But, there are conditions?' said Arabella.

'Yes. Wilfrid's enigma is explained. Bella, that woman has seen papa.'

'What woman?'

'Mrs. Chump.'

'She has our permission to see him in town, if that is any consolation to her.'

'She has told him,' continued Adela, 'that no explanation, or whatever it may be, was received by her.'

'Certainly not, if it was not sent.'

'Papa,' and Adela's voice trembled, 'papa will not think of Besworth,—not a word of it!—until—until we consent to welcome that woman here as our guest.'

Cornelia was the first to break the silence that followed this astounding intelligence. 'Then,' she said, 'Besworth is not to be thought of. You told him so?'

Adela's head drooped. 'Oh!' she cried, 'what shall we do? We shall be a laughing-stock to the neighbourhood. The house will have to be locked up. We shall live like hermits worried by a demon. Her brogue! Do you remember it? It is not simply Irish. It 's Irish steeped in brine. It 's pickled Irish!'

She feigned the bursting into tears of real vexation.

'You speak,' said Cornelia contemptuously, 'as if we had very humbly bowed our heads to the infection.'

'Papa making terms with us!' murmured Arabella.

'Pray, repeat his words.'

Adela tossed her curls. 'I will, as well as I can. I began by speaking of Besworth cheerfully; saying, that if he really had no strong affection for Brookfield, that would make him regret quitting it, we saw innumerable advantages in the change of residence proposed. Predilection,—not affection—that was what I said. He replied that Besworth was a large place, and I pointed out that therein lay one of its principal merits. I expected what would come. He alluded to the possibility of our changeing our condition. You know that idea haunts him. I told him our opinion of the folly of the thing. I noticed that he grew red in the face, and I said that of course marriage was a thing ordained, but that we objected to being submerged in matrimony until we knew who and what we were. I confess he did not make a bad reply, of its kind. "You 're like a youngster playing truant that he may gain knowledge." What do you think of it?'

'A smart piece of City-speech,' was Arabella's remark: Cornelia placidly observing, 'Vulgarity never contains more than a minimum of the truth.'

'I said,' Adela went on, '"Think as you will, papa, we know we are right." He looked really angry. He said, that we have the absurdest ideas—you tell me to repeat his words—of any girls that ever existed; and then he put a question: listen: I give it without comment: "I dare say, you all object to widows marrying again." I kept myself quiet. "Marrying *again*, papa! If they marry once they might as well marry a dozen times." It was the best way to irritate him. I did not intend it; that is all I can say. He jumped from his chair, rubbed his hair, and almost ran up and down the library floor, telling me that I prevaricated. "You object to a widow marrying at all—that 's my question!" he cried out loud. Of course I contained my voice all the more. "Distinctly, papa." When I had spoken, I could scarcely help laughing. He went like a pony that is being broken in, crying, I don't know how many times, "Why? What 's your reason?" You may suppose, darlings, that I decline to enter upon explanation. If a person is dense upon a matter of pure sentiment, there is no ground between us: he has simply a sense wanting. "What has all this to do with Besworth?" I asked. "A great deal more than you fancy," was his answer. He seemed to speak every word at me in capital letters. Then, as if a little ashamed, he sat down, and reached out his hand to mine, and I saw his eyes were moist. I drew my chair nearer to him. Now, whether I did right or wrong in this, I do not know: I leave it entirely to your judgement. If you consider how I was placed, you will at all events excuse me. What I did was—you know, the very farthest suspicion one has of an extreme possibility one does not mind mentioning: I said "Papa, if it should so happen that money is the objection to Besworth, we will not trouble you." At this, I can only say that he behaved like an

insane person. He denounced me as wilfully insulting him that I might avoid one subject.'

'And what on earth can that be?' interposed Arabella.

'You may well ask. Could a genie have guessed that Mrs. Chump was at the bottom of it all? The conclusion of the dreadful discussion is this, that papa offers to take the purchase of Besworth into *his consideration*, if we, as I said before, will receive Mrs. Chump as our honoured guest. I am bound to say, poor dear old man, he spoke kindly, as he always does, and kissed me, and offered to give me anything I might want. I came from him stupefied. I have hardly got my senses about me yet.'

The ladies caressed her, with grave looks; but neither of them showed a perturbation of spirit like that which distressed Adela.

'Wilfrid's meaning is now explained,' said Cornelia. 'He is in league with papa; or has given in his adhesion to papa's demands, at least. He is another example of the constant tendency in men to be what they call "practical" at the expense of honour and sincerity.'

'I hope not,' said Arabella. 'In any case, that need not depress you so seriously, darling.'

She addressed Adela.

'Do you not see?' Adela cried, in response. 'What! are you both blind to the real significance of papa's words? I could not have believed it! Or am I this time too acute? I pray to heaven it may be so!'

Both ladies desired her to be explicit; Arabella, eagerly; Cornelia with distrust.

'The question of a widow marrying! What is this woman, whom papa wishes to force on us as our guest? Why should he do that? Why should he evince anxiety with regard to our opinion of the decency of widows contemplating re-union? Remember previous words and hints when we lived in the city!'

'This at least you may spare us,' said Cornelia, ruffling offended.

Adela smiled in tenderness for her beauty.

'But, it is important, if we are following a track, dear. Think over it.'

'No!' cried Arabella. 'It cannot be true. We might easily have guessed this, if we ever dreamed of impossibilities.'

'In such cases, when appearances lean in one direction, set principles in the opposite balance,' added Cornelia. 'What Adela apprehends may seem to impend, but we know that papa is incapable of doing it. To know *that*, shuts the gates of suspicion. She has allowed herself to be troubled by a ghastly nightmare.'

Adela believed in her own judgement too completely not to be sure that her sisters were, perhaps unknowingly, disguising a slowness of perception they were ashamed of, by thus partially accusing her of giddiness. She bit her lip.

'Very well; if you have no fears whatever, you need not abandon the idea of Besworth.'

'I abandon nothing,' said Arabella. 'If I have to make a choice, I take that which is least objectionable. I am chagrined, most, at the idea that Wilfrid has been treacherous.'

'Practical,' Cornelia suggested. 'You are not speaking of one of our sex.'

Questions were then put to Adela, whether Mr. Pole had spoken in the manner of one who was prompted: whether he hesitated as he spoke: whether, in short, Wilfrid was seen behind his tongue. Adela resolved that Wilfrid should have one protectress.

'You are entirely mistaken in ascribing treachery to him,' she said. 'It is papa that is changed. You may suppose it to be without any reason, if you please. I

would tell you to study him for yourselves, only I am convinced that these special private interviews are anything but good policy, and are strictly to be avoided, unless of course, as in the present instance, we have something directly to do.'

Toward dawn the ladies had decreed that it was policy to be quite passive, and provoke no word of Mrs. Chump by making any allusion to Besworth, and by fencing with the mention of the place.

As they rarely failed to carry out any plan deliberately conceived by them, Mr. Pole was astonished to find that Besworth was altogether dropped. After certain scattered attempts to bring them upon Besworth, he shrugged, and resigned himself, but without looking happy.

Indeed he looked so dismal that the ladies began to think he had a great longing for Besworth. And yet he did not go there, or even praise it to the discredit of Brookfield! They were perplexed.

'Let me ask you how it is,' said Cornelia to Mr. Barrett, 'that a person whom we know—whose actions and motives are as plain to us as though discerned through a glass, should at times produce a completer mystification than any other creature? Or have you not observed it?'

'I have had better opportunities of observing it than most people,' Mr. Barrett replied, with one of his saddest amused smiles. 'I have come to the conclusion that the person we know best is the one whom we never understand.'

'You answer me with a paradox.'

'Is it not the natural attendant on an assumption?'

'What assumption?'

'That you know a person thoroughly.'

'May we not?'

'Do you, when you acknowledge this "complete mystification"?'

'Yes.' Cornelia smiled when she had said it. 'And no.'

Mr. Barrett, with his eyes on her, laughed softly. 'Which is paradox at the fountain-head! But, when we say we know any one, we mean commonly that we are accustomed to his ways and habits of mind; or, that we can reckon on the predominant influence of his appetites. Sometimes we can tell which impulse is likely to be the most active, and which principle the least restraining. The only knowledge to be trusted is a grounded or scientific study of the springs that move him, side by side with his method of moving the springs. If you fail to do this, you have two classes under your eyes: you have sane and madman: and it will seem to you that the ranks of the latter are constantly being swollen in an extraordinary manner. The customary impression, as we get older, is that our friends are the maddest people in the world. You see, we have grown accustomed to them; and now, if they bewilder us, our judgement, in self-defence, is compelled to set them down lunatic.'

Cornelia bowed her stately head with gentle approving laughter.

'They must go, or they despatch us thither,' she said, while her fair face dimpled into serenity. The remark was of a lower nature than an intellectual discussion ordinarily drew from her: but could Mr. Barrett have read in her heart, he might have seen that his words were beginning to rob that organ of its native sobriety. So that when he spoke a cogent phrase, she was silenced, and became aware of a strange exultation in her blood that obscured grave thought. Cornelia attributed this display of mental weakness altogether to Mr. Barrett's mental force. The interposition of a fresh agency was undreamt of by the lady.

Meanwhile, it was evident that Mr. Pole was a victim

to one of his fevers of shyness. He would thrum on the table, frowning; and then, as he met the look of one of the ladies, try to disguise the thought in his head with a forced laugh. Occasionally, he would turn toward them, as if he had just caught a lost idea that was peculiarly precious. The ladies drawing up to attend to the communication, had a most trivial matter imparted to them, and away he went. Several times he said to them: 'You don't make friends, as you ought'; and their repudiation of the charge made him repeat: 'You don't make friends—home friends.'

'The house can be as full as we care to have it, papa.'

'Yes, acquaintances! All very well, but I mean friends—rich friends.'

'We will think of it, papa,' said Adela, 'when we want money.'

'It isn't that,' he murmured.

Adela had written to Wilfrid a full account of her interview with her father. Wilfrid's reply was laconic. 'If you cannot stand a week of the brogue, give up Besworth, by all means.' He made no further allusion to the place. They engaged an opera-box, for the purpose of holding a consultation with him in town. He wrote evasively, but did not appear, and the ladies, with Emilia between them, listened to every foot-fall by the box-door, and were too much preoccupied to marvel that Emilia was just as inattentive to the music as they were. When the curtain dropped they noticed her dejection.

'What ails you?' they asked.

'Let us go out of London to-night,' she whispered, and it was difficult to persuade her that she would see Brookfield again.

'Remember,' said Adela, 'it is you that run away from us, not we from you.'

Soft chidings of this description were the only re-

proaches for her naughty conduct. She seemed contrite: very still and timid, since that night of adventure. The ladies were glad to observe it, seeing that it lent her an air of refinement, and proved her sensible to correction.

At last Mr. Pole broke the silence. He had returned from business, humming and rubbing his hands, like one newly primed with a suggestion that was the key of a knotty problem. Observant Adela said: 'Have you seen Wilfrid, papa?'

'Saw him in the morning,' Mr. Pole replied carelessly.

Mr. Barrett was at the table.

'By the way, what do you think of our law of primogeniture?' Mr. Pole addressed him.

He replied with the usual allusion to a basis of aristocracy.

'Well, it 's the English system,' said Mr. Pole. 'That 's always in its favour at starting. I 'm Englishman enough to think that. There ought to be an entail of every decent bit of property, eh?'

It was observed that Mr. Barrett reddened as he said, 'I certainly think that a young man should not be subject to his father's caprice.'

'Father's caprice! That isn't common. But, if you 're founding a family, you must entail.'

'We agree, sir, from my point of view, and from yours.'

'Knits the family bond, don't you think? I mean, makes the trunk of the tree firm. It makes the girls poor, though!'

Mr. Barrett saw that he had some confused legal ideas in his head, and that possibly there were personal considerations in the background; so he let the subject pass.

When the guest had departed, Mr. Pole grew demonstrative in his paternal caresses. He folded Adela in one arm, and framed her chin in his fingers: marks of affection dear to her before she had outgrown them.

'So!' he said, 'you 've given up Besworth, have you?'

At the name, Arabella and Cornelia drew nearer to his chair.

'Given up Besworth, papa? It is not we who have given it up,' said Adela.

'Yes, you have; and quite right too. You say, "What 's the use of it, for that 's a sort of thing that always goes to the son."'

'You suppose, papa, that we indulge in ulterior calculations?' came from Cornelia.

'Well, you see, my love!—no, I don't suppose it at all. But to buy a place and split it up after two or three years —I dare say they wouldn't insure me for more,—that 's nonsense. And it seems unfair to you, as you must think——'

'Darling papa! we are not selfish!' it rejoiced Adela to exclaim.

His face expressed a transparent simple-mindedness that won the confidence of the ladies and awakened their ideal of generosity.

'I know what you mean, papa,' said Arabella. 'But, we love Besworth; and if we may enjoy the place for the time that we are all together, I shall think it sufficient. I do not look beyond.'

Her sisters echoed the sentiment, and sincerely. They were as little sordid as creatures could be. If deeply questioned, it would have been found that their notion of the position Providence had placed them in (in other words, their father's unmentioned wealth), permitted them to be as lavish as they pleased. Mr. Pole had endowed them with a temperament similar to his own; and he had educated it. In feminine earth it flourished wonderfully. Shy as himself, their shyness took other forms, and developed with warm youth. Not only did

it shut them up from others (which is the first effect of this disease), but it tyrannized over them internally: so that there were subjects they had no power to bring their minds to consider. Money was in the list. The Besworth question, as at present considered, involved the money question. All of them felt that; father and children. It is not surprising, therefore, that they hurried over it as speedily as they could, and by a most comical exhibition of implied comprehension of meanings and motives.

'Of course, we 're only in the opening stage of the business,' said Mr. Pole. 'There 's nothing decided, you know. Lots of things got to be considered. You mean what you say, do you? Very well. And you want me to think of it? So I will. And look, my dears, you know that——' (here his voice grew husky, as was the case with it when touching a shy topic even beneath the veil; but they were above suspicion) 'you know that—a—that we must all give way a little to the other, now and then. Nothing like being kind.'

'Pray, have no fear, papa dear!' rang the clear voice of Arabella.

'Well, then, you 're all for Besworth, even though it isn't exactly for your own interest? All right.'

The ladies kissed him.

'We 'll each stretch a point,' he continued. 'We shall get on better if we do. Much! You 're a little hard on people who 're not up to the mark. There 's an end to that. Even your old father will like you better.'

These last remarks were unintelligible to the withdrawing ladies.

On the morning that followed, Mr. Pole expressed a hope that his daughters intended to give him a good dinner that day; and he winked humorously and kindly: by which they understood him to be addressing a

sort of propitiation to them for the respect he paid to his appetite.

'Papa,' said Adela, 'I myself will speak to Cook.'

She added, with a smile thrown to her sisters, without looking at them, 'I dare say, she will know who I am.'

Mr. Pole went down to his wine-cellar, and was there busy with bottles till the carriage came for him. A bason was fetched that he might wash off the dust and cobwebs in the passage. Having rubbed his hands briskly with soap, he dipped his head likewise, in an oblivious fit, and then turning round to the ladies, said, 'What have I forgotten?' looking woebegone with his dripping vacant face. 'Oh, ah! I remember now'; and he chuckled gladly.

He had just for one moment forgotten that he was acting, and a pang of apprehension had caught him when the water covered his face, to the effect that he must forfeit the natural artistic sequence of speech and conduct which disguised him so perfectly. Away he drove, nodding and waving his hand.

'Dear, simple, innocent old man!' was the pitiful thought in the bosoms of the ladies; and if it was accompanied by the mute exclamation, 'How singular that we should descend from him!' it would not have been for the first time.

They passed one of their delightful quiet days, in which they paved the future with gold, and, if I may use so bold a figure, lifted parasols against the great sun that was to shine on them. Now they listened to Emilia, and now strolled in the garden; conversed on the social skill of Lady Gosstre, who was nevertheless narrow in her range; and on the capacities of mansions, on the secret of mixing people in society, and what to do with the women! A terrible problem, this latter one. Not terrible (to hostesses) at a mere rout or drum, or at a dance pure and

simple, but terrible when you want good talk to circulate: for then they are not, as a body, amused; and when they are not amused, you know, they are not inclined to be harmless; and in this state they are vipers; and where is society then? And yet you cannot do without them!—which is the revolting mystery. I need not say that I am not responsible for these critical remarks. Such tenderness to the sex comes only from its sisters.

So went a day rich in fair dreams to the ladies; and at the hour of their father's return they walked across the parvenu park, in a state of enthusiasm for Besworth, that threw some portion of its decorative light on the donor of Besworth. When his carriage was heard on the road, they stood fast, and greeted his appearance with a display of pocket-handkerchiefs in the breeze, a proceeding that should have astonished him, being novel; but seemed not to do so, for it was immediately responded to by the vigorous waving of a pair of pocket-handkerchiefs from the carriage-window! The ladies smiled at this piece of simplicity which prompted him to use both his hands, as if one would not have been enough. Complacently they continued waving. Then Adela looked at her sisters; Cornelia's hand dropped: and Arabella, the last to wave, was the first to exclaim: 'That must be a woman's arm!'

The carriage stopped at the gate, and it was one in the dress of a woman at least, and of the compass of a big woman, who descended by the aid of Mr. Pole. Safely alighted, she waved her pocket-handkerchief afresh. The ladies of Brookfield did not speak to one another; nor did they move their eyes from the object approaching. A simultaneous furtive extinction of three pocket-handkerchiefs might have been noticed. There was no further sign given.

CHAPTER XV

WILFRID'S EXHIBITION OF TREACHERY

A LETTER from Brookfield apprised Wilfrid that Mr. Pole had brought Mrs. Chump to the place as a visitor, and that she was now in the house. Formal as a circular, the idea of it appeared to be that the bare fact would tell him enough and inspire him with proper designs. No reply being sent, a second letter arrived, formal too, but pointing out his duty to succour his afflicted family, and furnishing a few tragic particulars. Thus he learnt, that while Mr. Pole was advancing toward the three grouped ladies, on the day of Mrs. Chump's arrival, he called Arabella by name, and Arabella went forward alone, and was engaged in conversation by Mrs. Chump. Mr. Pole left them to make his way to Adela and Cornelia. 'Now, mind, I expect you to keep to your agreement,' he said. Gradually they were led on to perceive that this simple-minded man had understood their recent talk of Besworth to signify a consent to the stipulation he had previously mentioned to Adela. 'Perfect simplicity is as deceiving as the depth of cunning,' Adela despairingly wrote, much to Wilfrid's amusement.

A third letter followed. It was of another tenor, and ran thus, in Adela's handwriting:—

'MY DARLING WILFRID,

'We have always known that some peculiar assistance would never be wanting in our extremity—aid, or comfort, or whatever you please to call it. At all events, *something* to show we are not neglected. That old notion of ours must be true. I shall say nothing

of our sufferings in the house. They continue. Yesterday, papa came from town, looking important. He had up some of his best wine for dinner. All through the service his eyes were sparkling on Cornelia. I spare you a family picture, while there is this huge blot on it. Naughty brother! But, listen! your place is here, for many reasons, as you will be quick enough to see. After dinner, papa took Cornelia into the library alone, and they were together for ten minutes. She came out very pale. She had been proposed for by Sir Twickenham Pryme, our Member for the borough. I have always been sure that Cornelia was born for Parliament, and he will be lucky if he wins her. We know not yet, of course, what her decision will be. The incident is chiefly remarkable to us as a relief to what I need not recount to you. But I wish to say one thing, dear Wilfrid. You are gazetted to a lieutenancy, and we congratulate you: but what I have to say is apparently much more trifling, and it is, that—will you take it to heart?—it would do Arabella and myself infinite good if we saw a little more of our brother, and just a *little* less of a very gentlemanly organ-player phenomenon, who talks so exceedingly well. He is a very pleasant man, and appreciates our ideas, and so forth; but it is our duty to love our brother best, and think of him foremost, and we wish him to come and remind us of our *duty*.

'At our Cornelia's request, with our concurrence, papa is silent in the house as to the purport of the communication made by Sir T. P.

'By the way, are *you* at all conscious of a sound-like absurdity in a Christian name of three syllables preceding a surname of one? Sir Twickenham Pryme! Cornelia's pronunciation of the name first gave me the feeling. The "Twickenham" seems to perform a sort of educated monkey kind of ridiculously decorous pirouette and

entrechat before the "Pryme." I think that Cornelia feels it also. You seem to fancy elastic limbs bending to the measure of a solemn church-organ. Sir Timothy? But Sir Timothy does not jump with the same grave agility as Sir Twickenham! If she rejects him, it will be *half* attributable to this.

'My own brother! I expect no confidences, but a whisper warns me that you have not been to Stornley twice without experiencing the truth of our old discovery, that the Poles are magnetic? Why should we conceal it from ourselves, if it be so? I think it a folly, and fraught with danger, for people not to know their characteristics. If they attract, they should keep in a circle where they will have no reason to revolt at, or say, repent of what they attract. My argumentative sister does not coincide. If she did, she would lose her argument.

'Adieu! Such is my dulness, I doubt whether I have made my meaning clear.

'Your thrice affectionate

'ADELA.

'P.S.—Lady Gosstre has just taken Emilia to Richford for a week. Papa starts for Bidport to-morrow.'

This short and rather blunt exercise in Fine Shades was read impatiently by Wilfrid. 'Why doesn't she write plain to the sense?' he asked, with the usual injustice of men, who demand a statement of facts, forgetting how few there are to feed the post; and that indication and suggestion are the only language for the multitude of facts unborn and possible. Twilight best shows to the eye what may be.

'I suppose I must go down there,' he said to himself, keeping a meditative watch on the postscript, as if it possessed the capability of slipping away and deceiving him. 'Does she mean that Cornelia sees too much of

this man Barrett? or, what does she mean?' And now he saw meanings in the simple passages, and none at all in the intricate ones; and the double-meanings were monsters that ate one another up till nothing remained of them. In the end, however, he made a wrathful guess and came to a resolution, which brought him to the door of the house next day at noon. He took some pains in noting the exact spot where he had last seen Emilia half in moonlight, and then dismissed her image peremptorily. The house was apparently empty. Gainsford, the footman, gave information that he thought the ladies were upstairs, but did not volunteer to send a maid to them. He stood in deferential footman's attitude, with the aspect of a dog who would laugh if he could, but being a footman out of his natural element, cannot.

'Here's a specimen of the new plan of treating servants!' thought Wilfrid, turning away. 'To act a farce for their benefit! That fellow will explode when he gets downstairs. I see how it is. This woman, Chump, is making them behave like schoolgirls.'

He conceived the idea sharply, and forthwith, without any preparation, he was ready to treat these high-aspiring ladies like schoolgirls. Nor was there a lack of justification; for when they came down to his shouts in the passage, they hushed, and held a finger aloft, and looked altogether so unlike what they aimed at being, that Wilfrid's sense of mastery became almost contempt.

'I know perfectly what you have to tell me,' he said. 'Mrs. Chump is here, you have quarrelled with her, and she has shut her door, and you have shut yours. It's quite intelligible and full of dignity. I really can't smother my voice in consequence.'

He laughed with unnecessary abandonment. The sensitive young women wanted no other schooling to recover themselves. In a moment they were seen leaning

back and contemplating him amusedly, as if he had been the comic spectacle, and were laughing for a wager. There are few things so sour as the swallowing of one's own forced laugh. Wilfrid got it down, and commenced a lecture to fill the awkward pause. His sisters maintained the opera-stall posture of languid attention, contesting his phrases simply with their eyebrows, and smiling. He was no match for them while they chose to be silent: and indeed if the business of life were conducted in dumb show, women would beat men hollow. They posture admirably. In dumb show they are equally good for attack and defence. But this is not the case in speech. So, when Arabella explained that their hope was to see Mrs. Chump go that day, owing to the rigorous exclusion of all amusement and the outer world from the house, Wilfrid regained his superior footing and made his lecture tell. In the middle of it, there rang a cry from the doorway that astonished even him, it was so powerfully Irish.

'The lady you have called down is here,' said Arabella's cold glance, in answer to his.

They sat with folded hands while Wilfrid turned to Mrs. Chump, who advanced, a shock of blue satin to the eye, crying, on a jump: 'Is ut Mr. Wilfrud?'

'It 's I, ma'am.' Wilfrid bowed, and the censorious ladies could not deny that his style was good, if his object was to be familiar. And if that was his object, he was paid for it. A great thick kiss was planted on his cheek, with the motto: 'Harm to them that thinks ut.'

Wilfrid bore the salute like a man who presumes that he is flattered.

'And it 's you!' said Mrs. Chump. 'I was just off. I 'm packed, and bonnutted, and ready for a start; becas, my dear, where there 's none but women, I don't think it natural to stop. You 're splendud! How a little fella

like Pole could go and be father to such a mighty big son, with your bit of moustache and your blue eyes! Are they blue or a bit of grey in 'em?' Mrs. Chump peered closely. 'They 're kill'n', let their colour be annyhow. And I that knew ye when ye were no bigger than my garter! Oh, sir! don't talk of ut; I 'll be thinkin' of my coffin. Ye 're glad to see me? Say, yes. Do!'

'Very glad,' quoth Wilfrid.

'Upon your honour, now?'

'Upon my honour!'

'My dears' (Mrs. Chump turned to the ladies), 'I 'll stop; and just thank your brother for 't, though you can't help being garls.'

Reduced once more to demonstrate like schoolgirls by this woman, the ladies rose together, and were retiring, when Mrs. Chump swung round and caught Arabella's hand. 'See heer,' she motioned to Wilfrid. Arabella made a bitter effort to disengage herself. 'See, now! It 's jeal'sy of me, Mr. Wilfrud, becas I 'm a widde and just an abom'nation to garls, poor darlin's! And twenty shindies per dime we 've been havin', and me such a placable body, if ye 'll onnly let m' explode. I 'm all powder, avery bit! and might ha' been christened Saltpetre, if born a boy. She hasn't so much as a shot to kill a goose, says Chump, poor fella! But he went, annyway. I must kiss somebody when I talk of 'm. Mr. Wilfrud, I' ll take the girls, and entitle myself to you.'

Arabella was the first victim. Her remonstrance was inarticulate. Cornelia's 'Madam!' was smothered. Adela behaved better, being more consciously under Wilfrid's eye; she prepared her pocket-handkerchief, received the salute, and deliberately effaced it.

'There!' said Mrs. Chump; 'duty to begin with. And now for you, Mr. Wilfrud.'

The ladies escaped. Their misery could not be con-

veyed to the mind. The woman was like a demon come among them. They felt chiefly degraded, not by her vulgarity, but by their inability to cope with it, and by the consequent sickening sense of animal inefficiency—the block that was put to all imaginative delight in the golden hazy future they figured for themselves, and which was their wine of life. An intellectual adversary they could have combated; this huge brogue-burring engine quite overwhelmed them. Wilfrid's worse than shameful behaviour was a common rallying-point; and yet, so absolutely critical were they by nature, their blame of him was held mentally in restraint by the superior ease of his manner as contrasted with their own lamentably silly awkwardness. Highly civilized natures do sometimes, and keen wits must always, feel dissatisfied when they are not on the laughing side: their dread of laughter is an instinctive respect for it.

Dinner brought them all together again. Wilfrid took his father's seat, facing his Aunt Lupin, and increased the distress of his sisters by his observance of every duty of a host to the dreadful intruder, whom he thus established among them. He was incomprehensible. His visit to Stornley had wrought in him a total change. He used to like being petted, and would regard everything as right that his sisters did, before he went there; and was a languid, long-legged, indifferent cavalier, representing men to them: things made to be managed, snubbed, admired, but always virtually subservient and in the background. Now, without perceptible gradation, his superiority was suddenly manifest; so that, irritated and apprehensive as they were, they could not, by the aid of any of their intricate mental machinery, look down on him. They tried to; they tried hard to think him despicable as well as treacherous. His style was too good. When he informed Mrs. Chump that he had hired a yacht

for the season, and added, after enlarging on the merits of the vessel, 'I am under your orders,' his sisters were as creatures cut in twain—one half abominating his conduct, the other approving his style. The bow, the smile, were perfect. The ladies had to make an effort to recover their condemnatory judgement.

'Oh!' cried Mrs. Chump; 'and if you 've got a yacht, Mr. Wilfrud, won't ye have a great parcel o' the arr'stocracy on board?'

'You may spy a title by the aid of a telescope,' said Wilfrid.

'And I 'm to come, I am?'

'Are you not elected captain?'

'Oh, if ye 've got lords and real ladus on board, I 'll come, be sure of ut! I 'll be as sick as a cat, I will. But, I 'll come, if it 's the rroon of my stomach. I 'd say to Chump, "Oh, if ye 'd onnly been born a lord, or would just get yourself struck a knight on one o' your shoulders,—oh, Chump!" I 'd say, "it wouldn't be necessary to be rememberin' always the words of the cerr'mony about lovin' and honourin' and obeyin' of a little whistle of a fella like you." Poor lad! he couldn't stop for his luck! Did ye ask me to take wine, Mr. Wilfrud? I 'll be cryin', else, as a widde should, ye know!'

Frequent administrations of wine arrested the tears of Mrs. Chump, until it is possible that the fulness of many a checked flow caused her to redden and talk slightly at random. At the first mention of their father's name, the ladies went out from the room. It was foolish, for they might have watched the effect of certain vinous innuendoes addressed to Wilfrid's apprehensiveness; but they were weakened and humbled, and everything they did was foolish. From the fact that they offended their keen critical taste, moreover, they were targets to

the shaft that wounds more fatally than all. No ridicule knocks the strength out of us so thoroughly as our own.

Whether or not he guessed their condition favourable for his plans, Wilfrid did not give them time to call back their scattered powers. At the hour of eleven he sent for Arabella to come to him in the library. The council upstairs permitted Arabella to go, on the understanding that she was prepared for hostilities, and ready to tear the mask from Wilfrid's face.

He commenced, without a shadow of circumlocution, and in a matter-of-fact way, as if all respect for the peculiar genius of the house of Pole had vanished: 'I sent for you to talk a word or two about this woman, who, I see, troubles you a little. I 'm sorry she 's in the house.'

'Indeed!' said Arabella.

'I 'm sorry she 's in the house, not for my sake, but for yours, since the proximity does not seem to . . . I needn't explain. It comes of your eternal consultations. You are the eldest. Why not act according to your judgement, which is generally sound? You listen to Adela, young as she is; or a look of Cornelia's leads you. The result is the sort of scene I saw this afternoon. I confess it has changed my opinion of you; it has, I grieve to say it. This woman is your father's guest; you can't hurt her so much as you hurt him, if you misbehave to her. You can't openly object to her and not cast a slur upon him. There is the whole case. He has insisted, and you must submit. You should have fought the battle before she came.'

'She is here, owing to a miserable misconception,' said Arabella.

'Ah! she is here, however. That is the essential, as your old governess Madame Timpan would have said.'

'Nor can a protest against coarseness be sweepingly interpreted as a piece of unfilial behaviour,' said Arabella.

'She is coarse,' Wilfrid nodded his head. 'There are some forms of coarseness which dowagers would call it coarsenesss to notice.

'Not if you find it locked up in the house with you—not if you suffer under a constant repulsion. Pray, do not use these phrases to me, Wilfrid. An accusation of coarseness cannot touch us.'

'No, certainly,' assented Wilfrid. 'And you have a right to protest. I disapprove the form of your protest—nothing more. A schoolgirl's . . . but you complain of the use of comparisons.'

'I complain, Wilfrid, of your want of sympathy.'

'That for two or three weeks you must hear a brogue at your elbow? The poor creature is not so bad; she is good-hearted. It 's hard that you should have to bear with her for that time and receive nothing better than Besworth as your reward.'

'Very; seeing that we endure the evil and decline the sop with it.'

'How?'

'We have renounced Besworth.'

'Have you! And did this renunciation make you all sit on the edge of your chairs, this afternoon, as if Edward Buxley had arranged you? You give up Besworth? I 'm afraid it 's too late.'

'Oh, Wilfrid! can you be ignorant that something more is involved in the purchase of Besworth?'

Arabella gazed at him with distressful eagerness, as one who believes in the lingering of a vestige of candour.

'Do you mean that my father may wish to give this woman his name?' said Wilfrid coolly. 'You have

sense enough to know that if you make his home disagreeable, you are taking the right method to drive him into such a course. Ha! I don't think it 's to be feared, unless you pursue these consultations. And let me say, for my part, we have gone too far about Besworth, and can't recede.'

'Why?'

'I have given out everywhere that the place is ours. I did so almost at your instigation. Besworth was nothing to me till you cried it up. And now I won't detain you. I know I can rely on your sense, if you will rely on it. Good night, Bella.'

As she was going a faint spark of courage revived Arabella's wits. Seeing that she was now ready to speak, he opened the door wide, and she kissed him and went forth, feeling driven.

But while Arabella was attempting to give a definite version of the interview to her sisters, a message came requesting Adela to descend. The ladies did not allow her to depart until two or three ingenuous exclamations from her made them share her curiosity.

'Ah?' Wilfrid caught her hand as she came in. 'No, I don't intend to let it go. You may be a fine lady, but you 're a rogue, you know, and a charming one, as I hear a friend of mine has been saying. Shall I call him out? Shall I fight him with pistols, or swords, and leave him bleeding on the ground, because he thinks you a pretty rogue?'

Adela struggled against the blandishment of this old familiar style of converse—part fun, part flattery—dismissed since the great idea had governed Brookfield.

'Please tell me what you called me down for, dear?'

'To give you a lesson in sitting on chairs. "Adela, or the Puritan sister," thus: you sit on the extremest edge, and your eyes peruse the ceiling; and . . .'

'Oh! will you ever forget that perfectly ridiculous scene?' Adela cried in anguish.

She was led by easy stages to talk of Besworth.

'Understand,' said Wilfrid, 'that I am indifferent about it. The idea sprang from you—I mean from my pretty sister Adela, who is President of the Council of Three. I hold that young woman responsible for all that they do. Am I wrong? Oh, very well. You suggested Besworth, at all events. And—if we quarrel, I shall cut off one of your curls.'

'We never will quarrel, my darling,' quoth Adela softly. 'Unless——' she added.

Wilfrid kissed her forehead.

'Unless what?'

'Well, then, you must tell me who it is that talks of me in that objectionable manner; I do not like it.'

'Shall I convey that intimation?'

'I choose to ask, simply that I may defend myself.'

'I choose to keep him buried, then, simply to save his life.'

Adela made a mouth, and Wilfrid went on: 'By the way, I want you to know Lady Charlotte; you will take to one another. She likes you, already—says you want dash; but on that point there may be two opinions.'

'If dash,' said Adela, quite beguiled, '—that is, dash! —what does it mean? But, if Lady Charlotte means by dash—am I really wanting in it? I should define it, the quality of being openly natural without vulgarity; and surely . . .!'

'Then you two differ a little, and must meet and settle your dispute. You don't differ about Besworth: or, didn't. I never saw a woman so much in love with a place as she is.'

'A place?' emphasized Adela.

'Don't be too arch. I comprehend. She won't take me minus Besworth, you may be sure.'

'Did you, Wilfrid!—but you did not—offer yourself as owner of Besworth?'

Wilfrid kept his eyes slanting on the floor.

'Now I see why you should still wish it,' continued Adela. 'Perhaps you don't know the reason which makes it impossible, or I would say—Bacchus! it must be compassed. You remember your old schoolboy oath which you taught me? We used to swear always, by Bacchus!'

Adela laughed and blushed, like one who petitions pardon for this her utmost sin, that is not regretted as it should be.

'Mrs. Chump again, isn't it?' said Wilfrid. 'Pole would be a preferable name. If she has the ambition, it elevates her. And it would be rather amusing to see the dear old boy in love.'

Adela gave her under-lip a distressful bite.

'Why do you, Wilfrid—why treat such matters with levity?'

'Levity? I am the last to treat ninety thousand pounds with levity.'

'Has she so much?' Adela glanced at him.

'She will be snapped up by some poor nobleman. If I take her down to the yacht, one of Lady Charlotte's brothers or uncles will bite, to a certainty.'

'It would be an excellent idea to take her!' cried Adela.

'Excellent! and I 'll do it, if you like.'

'Could you bear the reflex of the woman?'

'Don't you know that I am not in the habit of sitting on the extreme edge . . . ?'

Adela started, breathing piteously: 'Wilfrid, dear! you want something of me—what is it?'

'Simply that you should behave civilly to your father's guest.'

'I had a fear, dear; but I think too well of you to entertain it for a moment. If civility is to win Besworth for you, there is my hand.'

'Be civil—that's all,' said Wilfrid, pressing the hand given. 'These consultations of yours and acting in concert—one tongue for three women—are a sort of missish, unripe nonsense, that one sees only in bourgeoise girls—eh? Give it up. Lady Charlotte hit on it at a glance.'

'And I, my chameleon brother, will return her the compliment, some day,' Adela said to herself, as she hurried back to her sisters, bearing a message for Cornelia. This lady required strong persuasion. A word from Adela: 'He will think you have some good reason to deny him a private interview,' sent her straight to the stairs.

Wilfrid was walking up and down, with his arms folded and his brows bent. Cornelia stood in the doorway.

'You desire to speak to me, Wilfrid? And in private?'

'I didn't wish to congratulate you publicly, that's all. I know it's rather against your taste. We'll shut the door, and sit down, if you don't mind. Yes, I congratulate you with all my heart,' he said, placing a chair for Cornelia.

'May I ask, wherefore?'

'You don't think marriage a matter for congratulation?'

'Sometimes: as the case may be.'

'Well, it's not marriage yet. I congratulate you on your offer.'

'I thank you.'

'You accept it, of course.'

'I reject it, certainly.'

After this preliminary passage, Wilfrid remained silent long enough for Cornelia to feel uneasy.

'I want you to congratulate me also,' he recommenced. 'We poor fellows don't have offers, you know. To be frank, I think Lady Charlotte Chillingworth will have me, if—— She 's awfully fond of Besworth, and I need not tell you that as she has position in the world, I ought to show something in return. When you wrote about Besworth, I knew it was as good as decided. I told her so and—— Well, I fancy there 's that sort of understanding between us. She will have me when . . . You know how the poorer members of the aristocracy are situated. Her father 's a peer, and has a little influence. He might push me; but she is one of a large family; she has nothing. I am certain you will not judge of her as common people might. She does me a particular honour.'

'Is she not much older than you, Wilfrid?' said Cornelia.

'Or, in other words,' he added, 'is she not a very mercenary person?'

'That, I did not even imply.'

'Honestly, was it not in your head?'

'Now you put it so plainly, I do say, it strikes me disagreeably; I have heard of nothing like it.'

'Do you think it unreasonable that I should marry into a noble family?'

'That is, assuredly, not my meaning.'

'Nevertheless, you are, on the whole, in favour of beggarly alliances.'

'No, Wilfrid.'

'Why do you reject this offer that has been made to you?'

Cornelia flushed and trembled; the traitorous feint had thrown her off her guard. She said, faltering: 'Would you have me marry one I do not love?'

'Well, well!' He drew back. 'You are going to do your best to stop the purchase of Besworth?'

'No; I am quiescent.'

'Though I tell you how deeply it concerns me!'

'Wilfrid, my own brother!' (Cornelia flung herself before him, catching his hand,) 'I wish you to be loved, first of all. Think of the horror of a loveless marriage, however gilded! Does a woman make stipulations ere she gives her hand? Does not love seek to give, to bestow? I wish you to marry well, but chiefly that you should be loved.'

Wilfrid pressed her head in both his hands.

'I never saw you look so handsome,' he said. 'You 've got back your old trick of blushing, too! Why do you tremble? By the way, you seem to have been learning a great deal about that business, lately?'

'What business?'

'Love.'

A river of blood overflowed her fair cheeks.

'How long has this been?' his voice came to her.

There was no escape. She was at his knees, and must look up, or confess guilt.

'This?'

'Come, my dearest girl!' Wilfrid soothed her. 'I can help you, and will, if you 'll take advice. I 've always known your heart was generous and tender, under that ice you wear so well. How long has this been going on?'

'Wilfrid!'

'You want plain speech?'

She wanted that still less.

'We 'll call it "this,"' he said. 'I have heard of it,

guessed it, and now see it. How far have you pledged yourself in "this?"'

'How far?'

Wilfrid held silent. Finding that her echo was not accepted as an answer, she moaned his name lovingly. It touched his heart, where a great susceptibility to passion lay. As if the ghost of Emilia were about him, he kissed his sister's hand, and could not go on with his cruel interrogations.

His next question was dew of relief to her.

'Has your Emilia been quite happy, of late?'

'Oh, quite, dear! very. And sings with more fire.'

'She 's cheerful?'

'She does not romp. Her eyes are full and bright.'

'She 's satisfied with everything here?'

'How could she be otherwise?'

'Yes, yes! You weren't severe on her for that escapade—I mean, when she ran away from Lady Gosstre's?'

'We scarcely alluded to the subject, or permitted her to.'

'Or permitted her to!' Wilfrid echoed, with a grimace. 'And she 's cheerful now?'

'Quite.'

'I mean, she doesn't mope?'

'Why should she?'

Cornelia had been too hard-pressed to have suspicion: the questions were an immense relief.

Wilfrid mused gloomily. Cornelia spoke further of Emilia, and her delight in the visits of Mr. Powys, who spent hours with her, like a man fascinated. She flowed on, little aware that she was fast restoring to Wilfrid all his judicial severity.

He said, at last: 'I suppose there 's no engagement existing?'

'Engagement?'

'You have not, what they call, plighted your troth to the man?'

Cornelia struggled for evasion. She recognized the fruitlessness of the effort, and abandoning it stood up.

'I am engaged to no one.'

'Well, I should hope not,' said Wilfrid. 'An engagement might be broken.'

'Not by me.'

'It might, is all that I say. A romantic sentiment is tougher. Now, I have been straightforward with you: will you be with me? I shall not hurt the man, or wound his feelings.'

He paused; but it was to find that no admission of the truth, save what oozed out in absence of speech, was to be expected. She seemed, after the fashion of women, to have got accustomed to the new atmosphere into which he had dragged her, without any conception of a forward movement.

'I see I must explain to you how we are situated,' said Wilfrid. 'We are in a serious plight. You should be civil to this woman for several reasons—for your father's sake and your own. She is very rich.'

'Oh, Wilfrid!'

'Well, I find money well thought of everywhere.'

'Has your late school been good for you?'

'This woman, I repeat, is rich, and we want money. Oh! not the ordinary notion of wanting money, but the more we have the more power we have. Our position depends on it.'

'Yes, if we can be tempted to think so,' flashed Cornelia.

'Our position depends on it. If you posture, and are poor, you provoke ridicule: and to think of scorning money, is a piece of folly no girls of condition are guilty of. Now, you know I am fond of you; so I 'll tell you

this: you have a chance; don't miss it. Something unpleasant is threatening; but you may escape it. It would be madness to throw such a chance away, and it is your duty to take advantage of it. What is there plainer? You are engaged to no one.'

Cornelia came timidly close to him. 'Pray, be explicit!'

'Well!—this offer.'

'Yes; but what—there is something to escape from.'

Wilfrid deliberately replied: 'There is no doubt of the Pater's intentions with regard to Mrs. Chump.'

'He means . . . ?'

'He means to marry her.'

'And you, Wilfrid?'

'Well, of course, he cuts me out. There—there! forgive me: but what can I do?'

'Do you conspire—Wilfrid, is it possible?—are you an accomplice in the degradation of our house?'

Cornelia had regained her courage, perforce of wrath. Wilfrid's singular grey eyes shot an odd look at her. He is to be excused for not perceiving the grandeur of the structure menaced; for it was invisible to all the world, though a real fabric.

'If Mrs. Chump were poor, I should think the Pater demented,' he said. 'As it is——! well, as it is, there 's grist to the mill, wind to the organ. You must be aware' (and he leaned over to her with his most suspicious gentleness of tone)—'you are aware that all organs must be fed; but you will make a terrible mistake if you suppose for a moment that the human organ requires the same sort of feeding as the one in Hillford Church.'

'Good-night,' said Cornelia, closing her lips, as if for good.

Wilfrid pressed her hand. As she was going, the

springs of kindness in his heart caused him to say: 'Forgive me, if I seemed rough.'

'Yes, dear Wilfrid; even brutality, rather than your exultation over the wreck of what was noble in you.'

With which phrase Cornelia swept from the room.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW THE LADIES OF BROOKFIELD CAME TO THEIR RESOLVE

'Seen Wilfrid?' was Mr. Pole's first cheery call to his daughters, on his return. An answer on that head did not seem to be required by him, for he went on: 'Ah! the boy 's improved. That place over there, Stornley, does him as much good as the Army did, as to setting him up, you know; common sense, and a ready way of speaking and thinking. He sees a thing now. Well, Martha, what do you,—eh? what 's your opinion?'

Mrs. Chump was addressed. 'Pole,' she said, fanning her cheek with vehement languor, 'don't ask me! my heart 's gone to the young fella.'

In pursuance of a determination to which the ladies of Brookfield had come, Adela, following her sprightly fancy, now gave the lead in affability toward Mrs. Chump.

'Has the conqueror run away with it to bury it?' she laughed.

'Och! won't he know what it is to be a widde!' cried Mrs. Chump. 'A widde's heart takes aim and flies straight as a bullet; and the hearts o' you garls, they 're like whiffs o' tobacca, curlin' and wrigglin' and not knowin' where they 're goin'. Marry 'em, Pole! marry 'em!' Mrs. Chump gesticulated, with two dangling hands. 'They 're nice garls; but, lord! they naver

see a man, and they 're stuputly contented, and want to remain garls; and, don't ye see, it was naver meant to be? Says I to Mr. Wilfrud (and he agreed with me), ye might say, nice sour grapes, as well as nice garls, if the creatures think o' stoppin' where they are, and what they are. It 's horrud; and, upon my honour, my heart aches for 'm!'

Mr. Pole threw an uneasy side-glance of inquisition at his daughters, to mark how they bore this unaccustomed language, and haply intercede between the unworthy woman and their judgement of her. But the ladies merely smiled. Placidly triumphant in its endurance, the smile said: 'We decline even to feel such a martyrdom as this.'

'Well, you know, Martha; I,' he said, 'I—no father could wish—eh? if you could manage to persuade them not to be so fond of me. They must think of their future, of course. They won't always have a home—a father, a father, I mean. God grant they may never want!—eh? the dinner; boh! let 's in to dinner. Ma'am!'

He bowed an arm to Mrs. Chump, who took it, with a scared look at him: 'Why, if ye haven't got a tear in your eye, Pole?'

'Nonsense, nonsense,' quoth he, bowing another arm to Adela.

'Papa, I 'm not to be winked at,' said she, accepting convoy; and there was some laughter, all about nothing, as they went in to dinner.

The ladies were studiously forbearing in their treatment of Mrs. Chump. Women are wonderfully quick scholars under ridicule, though it half-kills them. Wilfrid's theory had impressed the superior grace of civility upon their minds, and, now that they practised it, they were pleased with the contrast they presented. Not the less were they maturing a serious resolve. The suspicion that their

father had secret vile designs in relation to Mrs. Chump, they kept in the background. It was enough for them that she was to be a visitor, and would thus destroy the great circle they had projected. To accept her in the circle, they felt, was out of the question. Wilfrid's plain-speaking broke up the air-bubble, which they had so carefully blown, and in which they had embarked all their young hopes. They had as much as given one another a pledge that their home likewise should be broken up.

'Are you not almost too severe a student?' Mr. Barrett happened to say to Cornelia, the day after Wilfrid had worried her.

'Do I show the signs?' she replied.

'By no means. But last night, was it not your light that was not extinguished till morning?'

'We soon have morning now,' said Cornelia; and her face was pale as the first hour of the dawn. 'Are you not a late footfarer, I may ask in return?'

'Mere restlessness. I have no appetite for study. I took the liberty to cross the park from the wood, and saw you—at least I guessed it your light, and then I met your brother.'

'Yes? you met him?'

Mr. Barrett gestured an affirmative.

'And he—did he speak?'

'He nodded. He was in some haste.'

'But, then, you did not go to bed at all that night? It is almost my turn to be lecturer, if I might expect to be listened to.'

'Do you not know—or am I constitutionally different from others?' Mr. Barrett resumed: 'I can't be alone in feeling that there are certain times and periods when what I would like to call poisonous influences are abroad, that touch my fate in the days to come. I know I am helpless. I can only wander up and down.'

'That sounds like a creed of fatalism.'

'It is not a creed; it is a matter of nerves. A creed has its "kismet." The nerves are wild horses.'

'It is something to be fought against,' said Cornelia admonishingly.

'Is it something to be distrusted?'

'I should say, yes.'

'Then I was wrong?'

He stooped eagerly, in his temperate way, to catch sight of her answering face. Cornelia's quick cheeks took fire. She fenced with a question of two, and stood in a tremble, marvelling at his intuition. For possibly, at that moment when he stood watching her window-light (ah, poor heart!) she was half-pledging her word to her sisters (in a whirl of wrath at Wilfrid, herself, and the world), that she would take the lead in breaking up Brookfield.

An event occurred that hurried them on. They received a visit from their mother's brother, John Pierson, a Colonel of Uhlans, in the Imperial-Royal service. He had rarely been in communication with them; his visit was unexpected. His leave of absence from his quarters in Italy was not longer than a month, and he was on his way to Ireland, to settle family business; but he called, as he said, to make acquaintance with his nieces. The ladies soon discovered, in spite of his foreign-cut chin and pronounced military habit of speech and bearing, that he was at heart fervidly British. His age was about fifty: a man of great force of shoulder and potent length of arm, courteous and well-bred in manner, he was altogether what is called a model of a cavalry officer. Colonel Pierson paid very little attention to his brother-in-law, but the ladies were evidently much to his taste; and when he kissed Cornelia's hand, his eyes grew soft, as at a recollection.

'You are what your mother once promised to be,' he said. To her he gave that mother's portrait, taking it solemnly from his breast-pocket, and attentively contemplating it before it left his hands. The ladies pressed him for a thousand details of their mama's youthful life; they found it a strange consolation to talk of her and image her like Cornelia. The foreign halo about the Colonel had an effect on them that was almost like what nobility produces; and by degrees they heated their minds to conceive that they were consenting to an outrage on that mother's memory, in countenancing Mrs. Chump's transparent ambition to take her place, as they did by staying in the house with the woman. The colonel's few expressive glances at Mrs. Chump, and Mrs. Chump's behaviour before the colonel, touched them with intense distaste for their present surly aspect of life. Civilized little people are moved to fulfil their destinies and to write their histories as much by distaste as by appetite. This fresh sentimental emotion, which led them to glorify their mother's image in their hearts, heightened and gave an acid edge to their distaste for the thing they saw. Nor was it wonderful that Cornelia, said to be so like that mother, should think herself bound to accept the office of taking the initiative in a practical protest against the desecration of the name her mother had borne. At times, I see that sentiment approaches too near the Holy of earthly Holies for us to laugh at it; it has too much truth in it to be denounced—nay, if we are not alert and quick of wit, we shall be deceived by it, and wonder in the end, as the fool does, why heaven struck that final blow; concluding that it was but another whimsy of the Gods. The ladies prayed to their mother. They were indeed suffering vile torture. Ethereal eyes might pardon the unconscious jugglery which made their hearts cry out to her that the step they

were about to take was to save her children from seeming to acquiesce in a dishonour to her memory. Some such words Adela's tongue did not shrink from; and as it is a common habit for us to give to the objects we mentally address just as much brain as is wanted for the occasion, she is not to be held singular.

Colonel Pierson promised to stay a week on his return from Ireland. 'Will that person be here?' he designated Mrs. Chump; who, among other things, had reproached him for fighting with foreign steel and wearing any uniform but the red.

The ladies and Colonel Pierson were soon of one mind in relation to Mrs. Chump. Certain salient quiet remarks dropped by him were cherished after his departure; they were half-willing to think that he had been directed to come to them, bearer of a message from a heavenly world to urge them to action. They had need of a spiritual exaltation, to relieve them from the palpable depression caused by the weight of Mrs. Chump. They encouraged one another with exclamations on the oddness of a visit from their mother's brother, at such a time of tribulation, indecision, and general darkness.

Mrs. Chump remained on the field. When Adela begged her papa to tell her how long the lady was to stay, he replied: 'Eh? By the way, I haven't asked her'; and retreated from this almost too obvious piece of simplicity, with, 'I want you to know her: I want you to like her—want you to get to understand her. Won't talk about her going just yet.'

If they could have seen a limit to that wholesale slaughter of the Nice Feelings, they might have summoned patience to avoid the desperate step to immediate relief: but they saw none. Their father's quaint kindness and Wilfrid's treachery had fixed her there, perhaps for good. The choice was, to let London come and see

them dragged through the mire by the monstrous woman, or to seek new homes. London, they contended, could not further be put off, and would come, especially now that the season was dying. After all, their parting from one another was the bitterest thing to bear, and as each seemed content to endure it for the good of all, and as, properly considered, they did not bury their ambition by separating, they said farewell to the young delicious dawn of it. By means of Fine Shades it was understood that Brookfield was to be abandoned. Not one direct word was uttered. There were expressions of regret that the village children of Ipley would miss the supervizing eyes that had watched over them—perchance! at any rate, would lose them. All went on in the household as before, and would have continued so, but that they had a chief among them. This was Adela Pole, who found her powers with the occasion.

Adela thought decisively: 'People never move unless they are pushed.' And when you have got them to move ever so little, then propel; but by no means expect that a movement on their part means progression. Without propulsion nothing results. Adela saw what Cornelia meant to do. It was not to fly to Sir Twickenham, but to dismiss Mr. Barrett. Arabella consented to write to Edward Buxley, but would not speak of old days, and barely alluded to a misunderstanding; though if she loved one man, this was he. Adela was disengaged. She had moreover to do penance, for a wrong committed; and just as children will pinch themselves, pleased up to the verge of unendurable pain, so do sentimentalists find a keen relish in performing secret penance for self-accused offences. Thus they become righteous to their own hearts, and evade, as they hope, the public scourge. The wrong committed was (translated out of Fine Shades), that she had made love to her sister's lover. In the original

tongue—she had innocently played with the sacred fire of a strange affection; a child in the temple!—Our penitent child took a keen pinching pleasure in dictating words for Arabella to employ toward Edward.

And then, recurring to her interview with Wilfrid, it struck her: 'Suppose that, after all, Money! . . .' Yes, Mammon has acted Hymen before now. Nothing else explained Mrs. Chump; so she thought, in one clear glimpse. Inveterate sentimental habit smeared the picture with two exclamations—'Impossible!' and 'Papa!' I desire it to be credited that these simple interjections absolutely obscured her judgement. Little people think either what they are made to think, or what they choose to think; and the education of girls is to make them believe that facts are their enemies—a naughty spying race, upon whom the dogs of *Pudeur* are to be loosed, if they surprise them without note of warning. Adela silenced her suspicion, easily enough; but this did not prevent her taking a measure to satisfy it. Petting her papa one evening, she suddenly asked him for ninety pounds.

'Ninety!' said Mr. Pole, taking a sharp breath. He was as composed as possible.

'Is that too much, papa, darling?'

'Not if you want it—not if you want it, of course not.'

'You seemed astonished.'

'The sum! it's an odd sum for a girl to want. Ten, twenty, fifty—a hundred; but you never hear of ninety, never! unless it's to pay a debt; and I have all the bills, or your aunt has them.'

'Well, papa, if it excites you, I will do without it. It is for a charity, chiefly.'

Mr. Pole fumbled in his pocket, muttering, 'No money here—cheque-book in town. I 'll give it you,' he said aloud, 'to-morrow morning—morrow morning, early.'

'That will do, papa'; and Adela relieved him immediately by shooting far away from the topic.

The ladies retired early to their hall of council in the bedchamber of Arabella, and some time after midnight Cornelia went to her room; but she could not sleep. She affected, in her restlessness, to think that her spirits required an intellectual sedative, so she went down to the library for a book; where she skimmed many—a fashion that may be recommended, for assisting us to a sense of sovereign superiority to authors, and also of serene contempt for all mental difficulties. Fortified in this way, Cornelia took a Plutarch and an Encyclopædia under her arm, to return to her room. But one volume fell, and as she stooped to recover it, her candle shared its fate. She had to find her way back in the dark. On the landing of the stairs, she fancied that she heard a step and a breath. The lady was of unshaken nerves. She moved on steadily, her hand stretched out a little before her. What it touched was long in travelling to her brain; but when her paralyzed heart beat again, she knew that her hand clasped another hand. Her nervous horror calmed as the feeling came to her of the palpable weakness of the hand.

'Who are you?' she asked. Some hoarse answer struck her ear. She asked again, making her voice distincter. The hand now returned her pressure with force. She could feel that the person, whoever it was, stood collecting strength to speak. Then the words came—

'What do you mean by imitating that woman's brogue?'

'Papa!' said Cornelia.

'Why do you talk Irish in the dark? There, goodnight. I 've just come up from the library; my candle dropped. I shouldn't have been frightened, but you talked with such a twang.'

'But I have just come from the library myself,' said Cornelia.

'I mean from the dining-room,' her father corrected himself hastily. 'I can't sit in the library; shall have it altered—full of draughts. Don't you think so, my dear? Good-night. What 's this in your arm? Books! Ah, you study! I can get a light for myself.'

The dialogue was sustained in the hard-whispered tones prescribed by darkness. Cornelia kissed her father's forehead, and they parted.

At breakfast in the morning it was the habit of all the ladies to assemble, partly to countenance the decency of matin-prayers, and also to give the head of the household their dutiful society till business called him away. Adela, in earlier days, had maintained that early rising was not fashionable; but she soon grasped the idea that a great rivalry with Fashion, in minor matters (where the support of the satirist might be counted on), was the proper policy of Brookfield. Mrs. Chump was given to be extremely fashionable in her hours, and began her Brookfield career by coming downstairs at ten and eleven o'clock, when she found a desolate table, well stocked indeed, but without any of the exuberant smiles of nourishment which a morning repast should wear.

'You are a Protestant, ma'am, are you not?' Adela mildly questioned, after informing her that she missed family prayer by her late descent. Mrs. Chump assured her that she was a firm Protestant, and liked to see faces at the breakfast-table. The poor woman was reduced to submit to the rigour of the hour, coming down flustered, and endeavouring to look devout, while many uncertainties as to the condition of the hooks of her attire distracted her mind and fingers. On one occasion, Gainsford, the footman, had been seen with his eye on her; and while Mr. Pole read of sacred things, at a pace

composed of slow march and amble, this unhappy man was heard struggling to keep under and extinguish a devil of laughter, by which his human weakness was shaken. He retired from the room with the speed of a voyager about to pay tribute on high seas. Mr. Pole cast a pregnant look at the servants' row as he closed the book; but the expression of his daughters' faces positively signified that no remark was to be made, and he contained himself. Later, the ladies told him that Gainsford had done no worse than any uneducated man would have been guilty of doing. Mrs. Chump had, it appeared, a mother's feeling for one flat curl on her rugged forehead, which was often fondly caressed by her, for the sake of ascertaining its fixity. Doubts of the precision of outline and general welfare of this curl, apparently, caused her to straighten her back and furtively raise her head, with an easy upward motion, as of a cork alighted in water, above the level of the looking-glasss on her left hand—an action she repeated, with a solemn aspect, four times; at which point Gainsford gave way. The ladies accorded him every extenuation for the offence. They themselves, but for the heroism of exalted natures, must have succumbed to the gross temptation. 'It is difficult, dear papa, to bring one's mind to religious thoughts in her company, even when she is quiescent,' they said. Thus, by the prettiest exercise of charity that can be conceived, they pleaded for the man Gainsford, while they struck a blow at Mrs. Chump; and in performing one of the virtues laid down by religion, proved their enemy to be hostile to its influences.

Mrs. Chump was this morning very late. The office of morning reader was new to Mr. Pole, who had undertaken it, when first Squire of Brookfield, at the dictate of the ladies his daughters; so that, waiting with the book before him and his audience expectant, he lacked com-

posure, spoke irritably in an under-breath of 'that woman,' and asked twice whether she was coming or not. At last the clump of her feet was heard approaching. Mr. Pole commenced reading the instant she opened the door. She stood there, with a face like a petrified Irish outcry. An imploring sound of 'Pole! Pole!' issued from her. Then she caught up one hand to her mouth, and rolled her head, in evident anguish at the necessitated silence. A convulsion passed along the row of maids, two of whom dipped to their aprons; but the ladies gazed with a sad consciousness of wicked glee at the disgust she was exciting in the bosom of their father.

'Will you shut the door?' Mr. Pole sternly addressed Mrs. Chump, at the conclusion of the first prayer.

'Pole! ye know that money ye gave me in notes? I must speak, Pole!'

'Shut the door.'

Mrs. Chump let go the door-handle with a moan. The door was closed by Gainsford, now one of the gravest of footmen. A chair was placed for her, and she sat down, desperately watching the reader for the fall of his voice. The period was singularly protracted. The ladies turned to one another, to question with an eyelid why it was that extra allowance was given that morning. Mr. Pole was in a third prayer, stumbling on and picking himself up, apparently unaware that he had passed the limit. This continued until the series of ejaculations which accompanied him waxed hotter—little muffled shrieks of: 'Oh!—Deer!—Oh, Lard!—When will he stop? Oh, mercy! Och! And me burrstin' to speak!—Oh! what 'll I do? I can't keep 't in!—Pole! ye 're kill'n me—Oh, deer! I 'll be sayin' somethin' to vex the prophets presently. Pole!'

If it was a race that he ran with Mrs. Chump, Mr. Pole was beaten. He came to a sudden stop.

Mrs. Chump had become too deeply absorbed in her impatience to notice the change in his tone; and when he said, 'Now then, to breakfast, quick!' she was pursuing her lamentable interjections. At sight of the servants trooping forth, she jumped up and ran to the door.

'Ye don't go.—Pole, they 're all here. And I 've been robbed, I have. Avery note I had from ye, Pole, all gone. And my purse left behind, like the skin of a thing. Lord forbid I accuse annybody; but when I get up, my first rush is to feel in my pocket. And, ask 'em!—If ye didn't keep me so poor, Pole, they 'd know I 'm a generous woman, but I cann't bear to be robbed. And pinmoney 's for spendin'; annybody 'll tell you that. And I ask ye t' examine 'em, Pole; for last night I counted my notes, wantin' change, and I thought of a salmon I bought on the banks of the Suir to make a present to Chump, which was our onnly visit to Waterford together: for he naver went t' Ireland before or after—dyin' as he did! and it 's not his ingrat'tude, with his talk of a Severrn salmon—to the deuce with 'm! that makes me soft—poor fella!—I didn't mean to the deuce;—but since he 's gone, his widde 's just unfit to bargain for a salmon at all, and averybody robs her, and she 's kept poor, and hatud!—D 'ye heer, Pole? I 've lost my money, my money! and I will speak, and ye shann't interrupt me!'

During the delivery of this charge against the household, Mr. Pole had several times waved to the servants to begone; but as they had always the option to misunderstand authoritative gestures, they preferred remaining, and possibly he perceived that they might claim to do so under accusation.

'How can you bring this charge against the inmates of my house—eh? I guarantee the honesty of all who serve me. Martha! you must be mad, mad!—Money? why, you never have money; you waste it if you do.'

'Not money, Pole? Oh! and why? Becas ye keep me low o' purpose, till I cringe like a slut o' the scullery, and cry out for halfpence. But, oh! that seventy-five pounds in notes!'

Mr. Pole shook his head, as one who deals with a gross delusion: 'I remember nothing about it.'

'Not about——?' Mrs. Chump dropped her chin. 'Ye don't remember the givin' of me just that sum of seventy-five, in eight notes, Pole?'

'Eh? I daresay I have given you the amount, one time or other. Now, let 's be quiet about it.'

'Yesterday mornin', Pole! And the night I go to bed I count my money, and, says I, I 'll not lock ut up, for I 'll onnly be unlockin' again to-morrow; and doin' a thing and undoin' ut 's a sign of a brain that 's addled—like yours, Pole, if ye say ye didn't go to give me the notes.'

Mr. Pole frowned at her sagaciously. 'Must change your diet, Martha!'

'My dite? And what 's my dite to do with my money?'

'Who went into Mrs. Chump's bedchamber this morning?' asked Mr. Pole generally.

A pretty little housemaid replied, with an indignant flush, that she was the person. Mrs. Chump acknowledged to being awake when the shutters were opened, and agreed that it was not possible her pockets could have been rifled then.

'So, you see, Martha, you 're talking nonsense,' said Mr. Pole. 'Do you know the numbers of those notes?'

'The numbers at the sides, ye mean, Pole?'

'Ay, the numbers at the sides, if you like; the 21593, and so on?'

'The 21593! Oh! I can't remember such a lot as that, if ever I leave off repeatin' it.'

'There! you see, you 're not fit to have money in your possession, Martha. Everybody who has bank-notes looks at the numbers. You have a trick of fancying all sorts of sums in your pocket; and when you don't find them there, of course they 're lost! Now, let 's have some breakfast.'

Arabella told the maids to go out. Mr. Pole turned to the breakfast-table, rubbing his hands. Seeing herself and her case abandoned, Mrs. Chump gave a deplorable shout. 'Ye 're crool! and young women that look on at a fellow-woman's mis'ry. Oh! how can ye do ut! But soft hearts can be the hardest. And all my seventy-five gone, gone! and no law out of annybody. And no frightenin' of 'em off from doin' the like another time! Oh, I will, I will have my money!'

'Tush! Come to breakfast, Martha,' said Mr. Pole. 'You shall have money, if you want it; you have only to ask. Now, will you promise to be quiet? and I 'll give you this money—the amount you 've been dreaming about last night. I 'll fetch it. Now, let us have no scenes. Dry your eyes.'

Mr. Pole went to his private room, and returned just as Mrs. Chump had got upon a succession of quieter sobs with each one of which she addressed a pathetic roll of her eyes to the utterly unsympathetic ladies respectively.

'There, Martha; there 's exactly the sum for you—free gift. Say thank you, and eat a good breakfast to show your gratitude. Mind, you take this money on condition that you let the servants know you made a mistake.'

Mrs. Chump sighed heavily, crumpling the notes, that the crisp sweet sound might solace her for the hard condition.

'And don't dream any more—not about money, I mean,' said Mr. Pole.

'Oh! if I dream like that I 'll be living double.' Mrs. Chump put her hand to the notes, and called him kind, and pitied him for being the loser. The sight of a fresh sum in her possession intoxicated her. It was but feebly that she regretted the loss to her Samuel Bolton Pole. 'Your memory 's worth more than that!' she said as she filled her purse with the notes. 'Anyhow, now I can treat somebody,' and she threw a wink of promise at Adela. Adela's eyes took refuge with her papa, who leaned over to her, and said: 'You won't mind waiting till you see me again? She 's taken all I had.' Adela nodded blankly, and the next moment, with an angry glance toward Mrs. Chump, 'Papa,' said she, 'if you wish to see servants in the house on your return, you must yourself speak to them, and tell them that we, their master and mistresses, do not regard them as thieves.' Out of this there came a quarrel as furious as the ladies would permit it to be. For Mrs. Chump, though willing to condone the offence for the sum she had received, stuck infamy upon the whole list of them. 'The Celtic nature,' murmured Cornelia. And the ladies maintained that their servants should be respected, at any cost. 'You, ma'am,' said Arabella, with a clear look peculiar to her when vindictive—'you may have a stain on your character, and you are not ruined by it. But these poor creatures . . .'

'Ye dare to compar' me——!'

'Contrast you, ma'am.'

'It 's just as imp'dent.'

'I say, our servants, ma'am . . .'

Oh! to the deuce with your "ma'am"; I hate the word. It 's like fittin' a cap on me. Ye want to make one a turbaned dow'ger, ye malicious young woman!'

'Those are personages that are, I believe, accepted in society!'

So the contest raged, Mrs. Chump being run clean through the soul twenty times, without touching the consciousness of that sensitive essence. Mr. Pole appeared to take the part of his daughters, and by-and-by Mrs. Chump, having failed to arouse Mrs. Lupin's involuntary laugh (which always consoled her in such cases), huffed out of the room. Then Mr. Pole, in an abruptly serious way, bashfully entreated the ladies to be civil to Martha, who had the best heart in the world. It sounded as if he were going to say more. After a pause, he added emphatically, 'Do!' and went. He was many days absent: nor did he speak to Adela of the money she had asked for when he returned. Adela had not the courage to allude to it.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE WOODS

Emilia sat in her old place under the dwarf pine. Mr. Powys had brought her back to Brookfield, where she heard that Wilfrid had been seen; and now her heart was in contest with an inexplicable puzzle: 'He was here, and did not come to me!' Since that night when they had walked home from Ipley Green, she had not suffered a moment of longing. Her senses had lain as under a charm, with heart at anchor and a mind free to work. No one could have guessed that any human spell was on the girl. 'Wherever he is, he thinks of me. I find him everywhere. He is safe, for I pray for him and have my arms about him. He will come.' So she waited, as some grey lake lies, full and smooth, awaiting the star below the twilight. If she let her thoughts run on to the

The Woods at Orsholt

hour of their meeting, she had to shut her eyes and press at her heart; but as yet she was not out of tune for daily life, and she could imagine how that hour was to be strewn with new songs and hushed surprises. And 'thus' he would look: and 'thus.' 'My hero!' breathed Emilia, shuddering a little. But now she was perplexed. Now that he had come and gone, she began to hunger bitterly for the sight of his face, and that which had hitherto nourished her grew a sickly phantom of delight. She wondered how she had forced herself to be patient, and what it was that she had found pleasure in.

None of the ladies were at home when Emilia returned. She went out to the woods, and sat, shadowed by the long bent branch; watching mechanically the slow rounding and yellowing of the beam of sunlight over the thick floor of moss, up against the fir-stems. The chaffinch and the linnet flitted off the grey orchard twigs, singing from new stations; and the bee seemed to come questioning the silence of the woods and droning disappointed away. The first excess of any sad feeling is half voluntary. Emilia could not help smiling, when she lifted her head out of a musing fit, to find that she had composed part of a minuet for the languid dancing motes in the shaft of golden light at her feet. 'Can I remember it?' she thought, and forgot the incident with the effort.

Down at her right hand, bordering a water, stood a sallow, a dead tree, channelled inside with the brown trail of a goat-moth. Looking in this direction, she saw Cornelia advancing to the tree. When the lady had reached it, she drew a little book from her bosom, kissed it, and dropped it in the hollow. This done, she passed among the firs. Emilia had perceived that she was agitated: and with that strange instinct of hearts beginning to stir, which makes them divine at once where

they will come upon the secret of their own sensations, she ran down to the tree and peered on tiptoe at the embedded volume. On a blank page stood pencilled: '*This is the last fruit of the tree. Come not to gather more.*' There was no meaning for her in that sentimental chord: but she must have got some glimpse of a meaning; for now, as in an agony, her lips fashioned the words: 'If I forget his face I may as well die'; and she wandered on, striving more and more vainly to call up his features. The—'Does he think of me?' and—'What am I to him?'—such timorous little feather-play of feminine emotion she knew nothing of: in her heart was the strong flood of a passion.

She met Edward Buxley and Freshfield Sumner at a cross-path, on their way to Brookfield; and then Adela joined the party, which soon embraced Mr. Barrett, and subsequently Cornelia. All moved on in a humming leisure, chattering by fits. Mr. Sumner was delicately prepared to encounter Mrs. Chump, 'whom,' said Adela, 'Edward himself finds it impossible to caricature'; and she affected to laugh at the woman.

'Happy the pencil that can reproduce!' Mr. Barrett exclaimed; and, meeting his smile, Cornelia said: 'Do you know, my feeling is, and I cannot at all account for it, that if she were a Catholic she would not seem so gross?'

'Some of the poetry of that religion would descend upon her, possibly,' returned Mr. Barrett.

'Do you mean,' Freshfield said quickly, 'that she would stand a fair chance of being sainted?'

Out of this arose some polite fencing between the two. Freshfield might have argued to advantage in a Court of law; but he was no match, on such topics and before such an audience, for a refined sentimentalist. More than once he betrayed a disposition to take refuge in his class (he

being son to one of the puisne Judges). Cornelia speedily punished him, and to any correction from her he bowed his head.

Adela was this day gifted with an extraordinary insight. Emilia alone of the party was as a blot to her; but the others she saw through, as if they had been walking transparencies. She divined that Edward and Freshfield had both come, in concert, upon amorous business—that it was Freshfield's object to help Edward to a private interview with her, and, in return, Edward was to perform the same service for him with Cornelia. So that Mr. Barrett was shockingly in the way of both; and the perplexity of these stupid fellows—who would insist upon wondering why the man Barrett and the girl Emilia (musicians both: both as it were, vagrants) did not walk together and talk of quavers and minims—was extremely comic. Passing the whithered tree, Mr. Barrett deserved thanks from Freshfield, if he did not obtain them; for he lingered, surrendering his place. And then Adela knew that the weight of Edward Buxley's remonstrative wrath had fallen on silent Emilia, to whom she clung fondly.

'I have had a letter,' Edward murmured, in the voice that propitiates secresy.

'A letter?' she cried loud; and off flew the man like a rabbit into his hole, the mask of him remaining.

Emilia presently found Mr. Barrett at her elbow. His hand clasped the book Cornelia had placed in the tree.

'It is hers,' said Emilia.

He opened it and pointed to his initials. She looked in his face.

'Are you very ill?'

Adela turned round from Edward's neighbouring head. 'Who is ill?'

Cornelia brought Freshfield to a stop: 'Ill?'

Before them all, book in hand, Mr. Barrett had to give assurance that he was hearty, and to appear to think that his words were accepted, in spite of blanched jowl and reddened under-lid. Cornelia threw him one glance: his eyes closed under it. Adela found it necessary to address some such comforting exclamation as 'Goodness gracious!' to her observant spirit.

In the park-path, leading to the wood, Arabella was seen as they came out the young branches that fringed the firs. She hurried up.

'I have been looking for you. Papa has arrived with Sir Twickenham Pryme, who dines with us.'

Adela unhesitatingly struck a blow.

'Lady Pryme, we make place for you.'

And she crossed to Cornelia. Cornelia kept her eyes fixed on Adela's mouth, as one looks at a place whence a venomous reptile has darted out. Her eyelids shut, and she stood a white sculpture of pain, pitiable to see. Emilia took her hand, encouraging the tightening fingers with a responsive pressure. The group shuffled awkwardly together, though Adela did her best. She was very angry with Mr. Barrett for wearing that absurdly pale aspect. She was even angry with his miserable bankrupt face for mounting a muscular edition of the smile Cornelia had shown. 'His feelings!' she cried internally; and the fact presented itself to her, that feelings were a luxury utterly unfit for poor men, who were to be accused of presumption for indulging in them.

'Now, I suppose you are happy?' she spoke low between Arabella and Edward.

The effect of these words was to colour violently two pair of cheeks. Arabella's behaviour did not quite satisfy the fair critic. Edward Buxley was simply caught

in a trap. He had the folly to imagine that by laughing he released himself.

'Is not that the laugh of an engaged?' said Adela to Freshfield.

He replied: 'That would have been my idea under other conditions,' and looked meaningly.

She met the look with: 'There are harsh conditions in life, are there not?' and left him sufficiently occupied by his own sensations.

'Mr. Barrett,' she inquired (partly to assist the wretch out of his compromising depression, and also that the question represented a real matter of debate in her mind), 'I want your opinion; will you give it me? Apropos of slang, why does it sit well on some people? It certainly does not vulgarize them. After all, in many cases, it is what they call "racy idiom." Perhaps our delicacy is strained?'

Now, it was Mr. Barrett's established manner to speak in a deliberately ready fashion upon the introduction of a new topic. Habit made him, on this occasion, respond instantly; but the opening of the gates displayed the confusion of ideas within and the rageing tumult.

He said: 'In many cases. There are two sorts. If you could call it the language of nature! which anything . . . I beg your pardon, Slang! Polite society rightly excludes it, because . . .'

'Yes, yes,' returned Adela; 'but do we do rightly in submitting to the absolute tyranny?—I mean, I think, originality flies from us in consequence.'

The pitiable mortal became a trifle more luminous: 'The objection is to the repetition of risked phrases. A happy audacity of expression may pass. It is bad taste to repeat it, that is all. Then there is the slang of heavy boorishness, and the slang of impatient wit . . .'

'Is there any fine distinction between the extremes?' said Cornelia, in as clear a tone as she could summon.

'I think,' observed Arabella, 'that whatever shows staleness speedily is self-condemned; and that is the case with slang.'

'And yet it 's to avoid some feeling of the sort that people employ it,' was Adela's remark; and the discussion of this theme dropped lifelessly, and they walked on as before.

Coming to a halt near the garden gate, Adela tapped Emilia's cheek, addressing her: 'How demure she has become!'

'Ah!' went Arabella, 'does she know papa has had a letter from Mr. Pericles, who wrote from Milan to say that he has made arrangements for her to enter the Academy there, and will come to fetch her in a few days?'

Emilia's wrists crossed below her neck, while she gave ear.

'To take me away?' she said.

The tragic attitude and outcry, with the mournful flash of her eyes, might have told Emilia's tale.

Adela unwillingly shielded her by interpreting the scene. 'See! she must be a born actress. They always exaggerate in that style, so that you would really think she had a mighty passion for Brookfield.'

'Or in it,' suggested Freshfield.

'Or in it!' she laughed assentingly.

Mr. Pole was perceived entering the garden, rubbing his hands a little too obsequiously to some remark of the baronet's, as the critical ladies imagined. Sir Twickenham's arm spread out in a sweep; Mr. Pole's head nodded. After the ceremony of the salute, the ladies were informed of Sir Twickenham's observation: Sir Twickenham Pryme, a statistical member of Parlia-

ment, a well-preserved half-century in age, a gentleman in bearing, passably grey-headed, his whiskers brushed out neatly, as if he knew them individually and had the exact amount of them collectively at his fingers' ends: Sir Twickenham had said of Mr. Pole's infant park that if devoted to mangold-wurzel it would be productive and would pay: whereas now it was not ornamental and was waste.

'Sir Twickenham calculates,' said Mr. Pole, 'that we should have a crop of—eh?'

'The average?' Sir Twickenham asked, on the evident upward mounting of a sum in his brain. And then, with a relaxing look upon Cornelia: 'Perhaps you might have fifteen, sixteen, perhaps for the first year; or, say—you see, the exact acreage is unknown to me. Say roughly, ten thousand sacks the first year.'

'Of what?' inquired Cornelia.

'Mangold-wurzel,' said the baronet.

She gazed about her. Mr. Barrett was gone.

'But, no doubt, you take no interest in such reckonings?' Sir Twickenham added.

'On the contrary, I take every interest in practical details.'

Practical men believe this when they hear it from the lips of gentlewomen, and without philosophically analyzing the fact that it is because the practical quality possesses simply the fascination of a form of strength. Sir Twickenham pursued his details. Day closed on Brookfield blankly. Nevertheless, the ladies felt that the situation was now dignified by tragic feeling, and remembering keenly how they had been degraded of late, they had a sad enjoyment of the situation.

CHAPTER XVIII

RETURN OF THE SENTIMENTALIST INTO BONDAGE

Meantime Wilfrid was leading a town-life and occasionally visiting Stornley. He was certainly not in love with Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, but he was in harness to that lady. In love we have some idea whither we would go: in harness we are simply driven, and the destination may be anywhere. To be reduced to this condition (which will happen now and then in the case of very young men who are growing up to something, and is, if a momentary shame to them, rather a sign of promise than not) the gentle male need not be deeply fascinated. Lady Charlotte was not a fascinating person. She did not lay herself out to attract. Had she done so, she would have failed to catch Wilfrid, whose soul thirsted for poetical refinement and filmy delicacies in a woman. What she had, and what he knew that he wanted, and could only at intervals assume by acting as if he possessed it, was a victorious aplomb, which gave her a sort of gallant glory in his sight. He could act it well before his sisters, and here and there a damsel; and coming fresh from Lady Charlotte's school, he had recently done so with success, and had seen the ladies feel toward him, as he felt under his instructress in the art. Some nature, however, is required for every piece of art. Wilfrid knew that he had been brutal in his representation of the part, and the retrospect of his conduct at Brookfield did not satisfy his remorseless critical judgement. In consequence, when he again saw Lady Charlotte, his admiration of that one prized characteristic of hers paralyzed him. She looked, and moved, and spoke, as if the earth were

her own. She was a note of true music, and he felt himself to be an indecisive chord; capable ultimately of a splendid performance, it might be, but at present crying out to be played upon. This is the condition of a man in harness, whom witlings may call what they will. He is subjugated: not won. In this state of subjugation he will joyfully sacrifice as much as a man in love. For, having no consolatory sense of happiness, such as encircles and makes a nest for lovers, he seeks to attain some stature, at least, by excesses of apparent devotion. Lady Charlotte believed herself beloved at last. She was about to strike thirty; and Rumour, stalking with a turban of cloud on her head,—enough that this shocking old celestial dowager, from condemnation had passed to pity of the dashing lady. Beloved at last! After a while there is no question of our loving; but we thirst for love, if we have not had it. The key of Lady Charlotte will come in the course of events. She was at the doubtful hour of her life, a warm-hearted woman, known to be so by few, generally consigned by devout-visaged Scandal (for who save the devout will dare to sit in the chair of judgement?) as a hopeless rebel against conventional laws; and worse than that, far worse,—though what, is not said.

At Stornley the following letter from Emilia hit its mark:—

'Dear Mr. Wilfrid,

'It is time for me to see you. Come when you have read this letter. I cannot tell you how I am, because my heart feels beating in another body. Pray come; come now. Come on a swift horse. The thought of you galloping to me goes through me like a flame that hums. You will come, I know. It is time. If I write foolishly, do forgive me. I can only make sure of the spelling,

and I cannot please you on paper, only when I see you.'

The signature of 'Emilia Alessandra Belloni' was given with her wonted proud flourish.

Wilfrid stared at the writing. 'What! all this time she has been thinking the same thing!' Her constancy did not swim before him in alluring colours. He regarded it as a species of folly. Disgust had left him. The pool of Memory would have had to be stirred to remind him of the pipe-smoke in her hair. 'You are sure to please me when you see me?' he murmured. 'You are very confident, young lady!' So much had her charm faded. And then he thought kindly of her, and that a meeting would not be good for her, and that she ought to go to Italy and follow her profession. 'If she grows famous,' whispered coxcombry, 'why then oneself will take a little of the praises given to her.' And that seemed eminently satisfactory. Men think in this way when you have loved them, ladies. All men? No; only the coxcombs; but it is to these that you give your fresh affection. They are, as it were, the band of the regiment of adorers, marching ahead, while we sober working soldiers follow to their music. 'If she grows famous, why then I can bear in mind that her heart was once in my possession: and it may return to its old owner, perchance.' Wilfrid indulged in a pleasant little dream of her singing at the Opera-house, and he, tied to a ferocious, detested wife, how softly and luxuriously would he then be sighing for the old time! It was partly good seed in his nature, and an apprehension of her force of soul, that kept him from a thought of evil to her. Passion does not inspire dark appetite. Dainty innocence does, I am told. Things are tested by the emotions they provoke. Wilfrid knew that there was no trifling

with Emilia, so he put the letter by, commenting thus: 'She 's right, she doesn't spell badly.' Behind which, to those who have caught the springs of his character, volumes may be seen.

He put the letter by. Two days later, at noon, the card of Captain Gambier was brought to him in the billiard-room,—on it was written: 'Miss Belloni waits on horseback to see you.' Wilfrid thought 'Waits!' and the impossibility of escape gave him a notion of her power.

'So, you are letting that go on,' said Lady Charlotte, when she heard that Emilia and the captain were in company.

'There is no fear for her whatever.'

'There is always fear when a man gives every minute of his time to that kind of business,' retorted her ladyship.

Wilfrid smiled the smile of the knowing. Rivalry with Gambier (and successful too!) did not make Emilia's admiration so tasteless. Some one cries out: 'But, what a weak creature is this young man!' I reply, he was at a critical stage of his career. All of us are weak in the period of growth, and are of small worth before the hour of trial. This fellow had been fattening all his life on prosperity; the very best dish in the world; but it does not prove us. It fattens and strengthens us, just as the sun does. Adversity is the inspector of our constitutions; she simply tries our muscle and powers of endurance, and should be a periodical visitor. But, until she comes, no man is known. Wilfrid was not absolutely engaged to Lady Charlotte (she had taken care of that), and being free, and feeling his heart beat in more lively fashion, he turned almost delightedly to the girl he could not escape from. As when the wriggling eel that has been prodded by the countryman's fork, finds that no amount of wriggling will release it, lo it twists in a knot around the imprisoning prong. This

simile says more than I mean it to say, but those who understand similes will know the measure due to them.

There sat Emilia on her horse. 'Has Gambier been giving her lessons?' thought Wilfrid. She sat up, well-balanced; and, as he approached, began to lean gently forward to him. A greeting 'equal to any lady's,' there was no doubt. This was the point Emilia had to attain, in his severe contemplation. A born lady, on her assured level, stood a chance of becoming a Goddess; but ladyship was Emilia's highest mark. Such is the state of things to the sentimental fancy when girls are at a disadvantage. She smiled, and held out both hands. He gave her one, nodding kindly, but was too confused to be the light-hearted cavalier. Lady Charlotte walked up to her horse's side, after receiving Captain Gambier's salute, and said: 'Come, catch hold of my hands and jump.'

'No,' replied Emilia; 'I only came to see him.'

'But you will see him, and me in the bargain, if you stay.'

'I fancy she has given her word to return early,' interposed Wilfrid.

'Then we 'll ride back with her,' said Lady Charlotte. 'Give me five minutes. I 'll order a horse out for you.'

She smiled, and considerately removed the captain, by despatching him to the stables.

A quivering dimple of tenderness hung for a moment in Emilia's cheeks, as she looked upon Wilfrid. Then she said falteringly, 'I think they wish to be as we do.'

'Alone?' cried Wilfrid.

'Yes; that is why I brought him over. He will come anywhere with me.'

'You must be mistaken.'

'No; I know it.'

'Did *he* tell you so?'

'No; Mr. Powys did.'

'Told you that Lady Charlotte——'

'Yes. Not, is; but, was. And he used that word . . . there is no word like it, . . . he said "her lover" —Oh! mine!' Emilia lifted her arms. Her voice from its deepest fall had risen to a cry.

Wilfrid caught her as she slipped from her saddle. His heart was in a tumult; stirred both ways: stirred with wrath and with love. He clasped her tightly.

'Am I?—am I?' he breathed.

'My lover!' Emilia murmured.

He was her slave again.

For, here was something absolutely his own. His own from the roots; from the first growth of sensation. Something with the bloom on it: to which no other finger could point and say: 'There is my mark.'

(And, ladies, if you will consent to be likened to a fruit, you must bear with these observations, and really deserve the stigma. If you will smile on men, because they adore you as vegetable products, take what ensues.)

Lady Charlotte did no more than double the time she had asked for. The party were soon at a quiet canter up the lanes; but entering a broad furzy common with bramble-plots and oak-shaws, the Amazon flew ahead. Emilia's eyes were so taken with her, that she failed to observe a tiny red-flowing runlet in the clay, with yellow-ridged banks almost baked to brick. Over it she was borne, but at the expense of a shaking that caused her to rely on her hold of the reins, ignorant of the notions of a horse outstripped. Wilfrid looked to see that the jump had been accomplished, and was satisfied. Gambier was pressing his hack to keep a respectable second.

Lady Charlotte spun round suddenly, crying, 'Catch the mare!' and galloped back to Emilia, who was deposited on a bush of bramble. Dismounting promptly, the lady said: 'My child, you 're not hurt?'

'Not a bit.' Emilia blinked.

'Not frightened?'

'Not a bit,' was half whispered.

'That 's brave. Now jump on your feet. Tell me why you rode over to us this morning. Quick. Don't hesitate.'

'Because I want Wilfrid to see his sister Cornelia,' came the answer, with the required absence of indecision.

Emilia ran straightway to meet Wilfrid approaching; and as both her hands, according to her fashion, were stretched out to him to assure him of her safety and take his clasp, forgetful of the instincts derived from riding-habits, her feet became entangled; she trod herself down, falling plump forward and looking foolish—perhaps for the first time in her life plainly feeling so.

'Up! little woman,' said Lady Charlotte, supporting her elbow.

'Now, Sir Wilfrid, we part here; and don't spoil her courage, now she has had a spill, by any "assiduous attentions" and precautions. She 's sure to take as many as are needed. If Captain Gambier thinks I require an escort, he may offer.'

The captain, taken by surprise, bowed, and flowed in ardent commonplace. Wilfrid did not look of a wholesome colour.

'Do you return?' he stammered; not without a certain aspect of righteous reproach.

'Yes. You will ride over to us again, probably, in a day or two? Captain Gambier will see me safe from the savage admirers that crowd this country, if I interpreted him rightly?'

Emilia was lifted to her seat. Lady Charlotte sprang unassisted to hers. 'Ta-ta!' she waved her fingers from her lips. The pairs then separated; one couple turning into green lanes, the other dipping to blue hills.

CHAPTER XIX

LIFE AT BROOKFIELD

Gossip of course was excited on the subject of the choice of a partner made by the member for the county. Cornelia placed her sisters in one of their most pleasing of difficulties. She had not as yet pledged her word. It was supposed that she considered it due to herself to withhold her word for a term. The rumour in the family was, that Sir Twickenham appreciated her hesitation, and desired that he might be intimately known before he was finally accepted. When the Tinleys called, they heard that Cornelia's acceptance of the baronet was doubtful. The Copleys, on the other hand, distinctly understood that she had decided in his favour. Owing to the amiable dissension between the Copleys and the Tinleys, each party called again; giving the ladies of Brookfield further opportunity for studying one of the levels from which they had risen. Arabella did almost all the fencing with Laura Tinley, contemptuously as a youth of station returned from college will turn and foil an ill-conditioned villager, whom formerly he has encountered on the green.

'Had they often met, previous to the . . . the proposal?' inquired Laura; and laughed: 'I was going to say "popping."'

'Pray do not check yourself, if a phrase appears to suit you,' returned Arabella.

'But it was in the neighbourhood, was it not?'

'They have met in the neighbourhood.'

'At Richford?'

'Also at Richford.'

'We thought it was sudden, dear; that 's all.'

'Why should it not be?'

'Perhaps the best things are, it is true.'

'You congratulate us upon a benefit?'

'*He* is to be congratulated seriously. Naturally. *When* she decides, let me know early, I do entreat you, because . . . well, I am of a different opinion from some people, who talk of another attachment, or engagement, and I do not believe in it, and have said so.'

Rising to depart, Laura Tinley resumed: 'Most singular! You are aware, of course, that poor creature, our organist—I ought to say yours—who looked (it was Mr. Sumner I heard say it—such a good thing!) "as if he had been a gentleman in another world, and was the ghost of one in this":—really one of the cleverest things! but he is clever!—Barrett 's his name: Barrett and some musical name before it, like Handel. I mean one that we are used to. Well, the man has totally and unexpectedly thrown up his situation.'

'His appointment,' said Arabella. Permitting no surprise to be visible, she paused: 'Yes. I don't think we shall give our consent to her filling the post.'

Laura let it be seen that her adversary was here a sentence too quick for her.

'Ah! you mean your little Miss Belloni?'

'Was it not of her you were thinking?'

'When?' asked Laura, shamefully bewildered.

'When you alluded to Mr. Barrett's vacant place.'

'Not at the moment.'

'I thought you must be pointing to her advancement.'

'I confess it was not in my mind.'

'In what consisted the singularity, then?'

'The singularity?'

'You prefaced your remarks with the exclamation, "Singular!"'

Laura showed that Arabella had passed her guard. She hastened to compliment her on her kindness to Emilia, and so sheathed her weapon for the time, having just enjoyed a casual inspection of Mrs. Chump entering the room, and heard the brogue an instant.

'Irish!' she whispered, smiling, with a sort of astonished discernment of the nationality, and swept through the doorway: thus conveying forcibly to Arabella her knowledge of what the ladies of Brookfield were enduring: a fine Parthian shot.

That Cornelia should hold a notable county man, a baronet and owner of great acres, in a state between acceptance and rejection, was considered high policy by the ladies, whom the idea of it elevated; and they encouraged her to pursue this course, without having a suspicion, shrewd as they were, that it was followed for any other object than the honour of the family. But Mr. Pole was in the utmost perplexity, and spoke of baronets as things almost holy, to be kneeled to, prayed for. He was profane. 'I thought, papa,' said Cornelia, 'that women conferred the favour when they gave their hands!'

It was a new light to the plain merchant. 'How should you say if a Prince came and asked for you?'

'Still that he asked a favour at my hands.'

'Oh!' went Mr. Pole, in the voice of a man whose reason is outraged. The placidity of Cornelia's reply was not without its effect on him, nevertheless. He had always thought his girls extraordinary girls, and born to

be distinguished. 'Perhaps she has a lord in view,' he concluded: it being his constant delusion to suppose that high towering female sense has always a practical aim at a material thing. He was no judge of the sex in its youth. 'Just speak to her,' he said to Wilfrid.

Wilfrid had heard from Emilia that there was a tragic background to this outward placidity; tears on the pillow at night and long vigils. Emilia had surprised her weeping, and though she obtained no confidences, the soft mood was so strong in the stately lady, that she consented to weep on while Emilia clasped her. Petitioning on her behalf to Wilfrid for aid, Emilia had told him the scene; and he, with a man's stupidity, alluded to it, not thinking what his knowledge of it revealed to a woman.

'Why do you vacillate, and keep us all in the dark as to what you mean?' he began.

'I am not prepared,' said Cornelia; the voice of humility issuing from a monument.

'One of your oracular phrases! Are you prepared to be straightforward in your dealings?'

'I am prepared for any sacrifice, Wilfrid.'

'The marrying of a man in his position is a sacrifice!'

'I cannot leave papa.'

'And why not?'

'He is ill. He does not speak of it, but he is ill. His actions are strange. They are unaccountable.'

'He has an old friend to reside in his house?'

'It is not that. I have noticed him. His mind . . . he requires watching.'

'And how long is it since you made this discovery?'

'One sees clearer perhaps when one is not quite happy.'

'Not happy! Then it 's for him that you turn the night to tears?'

Cornelia closed her lips. She divined that her betrayer

must be close in his confidence. She went shortly after to Emilia, whose secret at once stood out bare to a kindled suspicion. There was no fear that Cornelia would put her finger on it accusingly, or speak of it directly. She had the sentimentalist's profound respect for the name and notion of love. She addressed Emilia vaguely, bidding her keep guard on her emotions, and telling her there was one test of the truth of masculine protestations; this, Will he marry you? The which, if you are poor, is a passably infallible test. Emilia sucked this in thoughtfully. She heard that lovers were false. Why, then of course they were not like her lover! Cornelia finished what she deemed her duty, and departed, while Emilia thought: 'I wonder whether he could be false to me'; and she gave herself shrewd half-delicious jarrings of pain, forcing herself to contemplate the impossible thing.

She was in this state when Mrs. Chump came across her, and with a slight pressure of a sovereign into her hand, said: 'There, it 's for you, little Belloni! and I see ye 've been thinkin' me one o' the scrape-hards and close-fists. It 's Pole who keeps me low, on purpose. And I 'm a wretch if I haven't my purse full, so you see I 'm all in the dark in the house, and don't know half so much as the sluts o' the kitchen. So, ye 'll tell me, little Belloni, is Arr'bella goin' to marry Mr. Annybody? And *is* Cornelia goin' to marry Sir Tickleham? And whether Mr. Wilfrud 's goin' to marry Lady Charlotte Chill'n-worth? Becas, my dear, there 's Arr'bella, who 's sharp, she is, as a North-easter in January, (which Chump 'd cry out for, for the sake of his ships, poor fella—he kneelin' by 's bedside in a long nightgown and lookin' just twice what he was!) she has me like a nail to my vary words, and shows me that nothin' can happen becas o' what I 've said. And Cornelia—if ye 'll fancy a tall

codfish on its tail: "Mrs. Chump, I beg ye 'll not go to believe annything of me." So I says to her, "Cornelia! my dear! do ye think, now, it 's true that Chump went and marrud his cook, that ye treat me so? becas my father," I tell her, "he dealt in porrk in a large way, and I was a fine woman, full of the arr'stocracy, and Chump a little puffed-out bladder of a man." So then she says: —"Mrs. Chump, I listen to no gossup: listen you to no gossup." And Mr. Wilfrud, my dear, he sends me on the flat o' my back, laughin'. And Ad'la she takes and turns me right about, so that I don't see the thing I 'm askin' after; and there 's nobody but you, little Belloni, to help me, and if ye do, ye shall know what the crumple of paper sounds like.'

Mrs. Chump gave a sugary suck with her tongue. Emilia returned the money to her.

'Ye 're foolush!' said Mrs. Chump. 'A shut fist 's good in fight and bad in friendship. Do ye know that? Open your hand.'

'Excuse me,' persisted Emilia.

'Pooh! take the money, or I 'll say ye 're in a conspiracy to make me blindman's-buff of the parrty. Take ut.'

'I don't want it.'

'May be, it 's not enough?'

'I don't want any, ma'am.'

'Ma'am, to the deuce with ye! I 'll be callin' ye a forr'ner in a minute, I will.'

Emilia walked away from a volley of terrific threats.

For some reason, unfathomed by her, she wanted to be alone with Wilfrid and put a question to him. No other, in sooth, than the infallible test. Not, mind you, that she wished to be married. But something she had heard (she had forgotten what it was) disturbed her, and that recent trifling with pain, in her excess of happiness, laid

her open to it. Her heart was weaker, and fluttered, as if with a broken wing. She thought, 'If I can be near him to lean against him for one full hour!' it would make her strong again. For, she found that if her heart was rising on a broad breath, suddenly, for no reason that she knew, it seemed to stop in its rise, break, and sink, like a wind-beaten billow. Once or twice, in a quick fear, she thought: 'What is this? Is this a malady coming before death?' She walked out gloomily, thinking of the darkness of the world to Wilfrid, if she should die. She plucked flowers, and then reproached herself with plucking them. She tried to sing. 'No, not till I have been with him alone'; she said, chiding her voice to silence. A shadow crossed her mind, as a Spring-mist dulls the glory of May. 'Suppose all singing has gone from me—will he love wretched me?'

By-and-by she met him in the house. 'Come out of doors to-night,' she whispered.

Wilfrid's spirit of intrigue was never to be taken by surprise. 'In the wood, under the pine, at nine,' he replied.

'Not there,' said Emilia, seeing this place mournfully dark from Cornelia's grief. 'It is too still; say, where there 's water falling. One can't be unhappy by noisy water.'

Wilfrid considered, and named Wilming Weir. 'And there we 'll sit and you 'll sing to me. I won't dine at home, so they won't susp—a—fancy anything.—Soh! and you want very much to be with me, my bird? What am I?' He bent his head.

'My lover.'

He pressed her hand rapturously, half-doubting whether her pronunciation of the word had not a rather too confident twang.

Was it not delightful, he asked her, that they should

be thus one to the other, and none know of it. She thought so too, and smiled happily, promising secresy, at his request; for the sake of continuing so felicitous a life.

'You, you know, have an appointment with Captain Gambier, and I with Lady Charlotte Chillingworth,' said he. 'How dare you make appointments with a captain of hussars?' and he bent her knuckles fondlingly.

Emilia smiled as before. He left her with a distinct impression that she did not comprehend that part of her lesson.

Wilfrid had just bled his father of a considerable sum of money; having assured him that he was the accepted suitor of Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, besides making himself pleasant in allusion to Mrs. Chump, so far as to cast some imputation on his sisters' judgement for not perceiving the virtues of the widow. The sum was improvidently large. Mr. Pole did not hear aright when he heard it named. Even at the repetition, he went: 'Eh?' two or three times, vacantly. The amount was distinctly nailed to his ear: whereupon he said, 'Ah!—yes! you young fellows want money: must have it, I suppose. Up from the bowels of the earth! Up from the—: you 're sure they 're not playing the fool with you, over there?'

Wilfrid understood the indication to Stornley. 'I think you need have no fear of that, sir.' And so his father thought, after an examination of the youth, who was of manly shape, and had a fresh, non-fatuous, air.

'Well, if that 's all right . . .' sighed Mr. Pole. 'Of course you 'll always know that money 's money. I wish your sisters wouldn't lose their time, as they do. Time 's worth more than money. What sum?'

'I told you, sir, I wanted—there 's the yacht, you know, and a lot of tradesmen's bills, which you don't

like to see standing:—about—perhaps I had better name the round sum. Suppose you write down eight hundred. I sha'n't want more for some months. If you fancy it too much . . .'

Mr. Pole had lifted his head. But he spoke nothing. His lips and brows were rigid in apparent calculation. Wilfrid kept his position for a minute or so; and then, a little piqued, he moved about. He had inherited the antipathy to the discussion of the money question, and fretted to find it unnecessarily prolonged.

'Shall I come to you on this business another time, sir?'

'No, God bless my soul!' cried his father; 'are you going to keep this hanging over me for ever? Eight hundred, you said.' He mumbled: 'salary of a chief clerk of twenty years' standing. Eight: twice four:—there you have it exactly.'

'Will you send it me in a letter?' said Wilfrid, out of patience.

'I 'll send it you in a letter,' assented his father. Upon which Wilfrid changed his mind. 'I can take a chair, though. I can easily wait for it now.'

'Save trouble, if I send it. Eh?'

'Do you wish to see whether you can afford it, sir?'

'I wish to see you show more sense—with your confounded "afford." Have you any idea of bankers' books?—bankers' accounts?' Mr. Pole fished his cheque-book from a drawer and wrote Wilfrid's name and the sum, tore out the leaf and tossed it to him. 'There, I've written to-day. Don't present it for a week.' He rubbed his forehead hastily, touching here and there a paper to put it scrupulously in a line with the others. Wilfrid left him, and thought: 'Kind old boy! Of course, he always means kindly, but I think I see

a glimpse of avarice as a sort of a sign of age coming on. I hope he 'll live long!'

Wilfrid was walking in the garden, imagining perhaps that he was thinking, as the swarming sensations of little people help them to imagine, when Cornelia ran hurriedly up to him and said: 'Come with me to papa. He 's ill: I fear he is going to have a fit.'

'I left him sound and well, just now,' said Wilfrid. 'This is your mania.'

'I found him gasping in his chair not two minutes after you quitted him. Dearest, he is in a dangerous state!'

Wilfrid stept back to his father, and was saluted with a ready 'Well?' as he entered; but the mask had slipped from half of the old man's face, and for the first time in his life Wilfrid perceived that he had become an old man.

'Well, sir, you sent for me?' he said.

'Girls always try to persuade you you 're ill—that 's all,' returned Mr. Pole. His voice was subdued; but turning to Cornelia, he fired up: 'It 's preposterous to tell a man who carries on a business like mine, you 've observed for a long while that he 's queer!—There, my dear child, I know that you mean well. I shall look all right the day you 're married.'

This allusion, and the sudden kindness, drew a storm of tears to Cornelia's eyelids.

'Papa! if you will but tell me what it is!' she moaned.

A nervous frenzy seemed to take possession of him. He ordered her out of the room.

She was gone, but his arm was still stretched out, and his expression of irritated command did not subside.

Wilfrid took his arm and put it gently down on the chair, saying: 'You're not quite the thing to-day, sir.'

'Are you a fool as well?' Mr. Pole retorted. 'What do you know of, to make me ill? I live a regular life. I eat and drink just as you all do; and if I have a headache,

I 'm stunned with a whole family screaming as hard as they can that I 'm going to die. Damned hard! I say, sir, it 's——' He fell into a feebleness.

'A little glass of brandy, I think,' Wilfrid suggested; and when Mr. Pole had gathered his mind he assented, begging his son particularly to take precautions to prevent any one from entering the room until he had tasted the reviving liquor.

CHAPTER XX

BY WILMING WEIR

A HALF-CIRCLE of high-banked greensward, studded with old park-trees, hung round the roar of the water; distant enough from the white-twisting fall to be mirrored on a smooth-heaved surface, while its outpushing brushwood below drooped under burdens of drowned reed-flags that caught the foam. Keen scent of hay, crossing the dark air, met Emilia as she entered the river-meadow. A little more, and she saw the white weir-piles shining, and the grey roller just beginning to glisten to the moon. Eastward on her left, behind a cedar, the moon had cast off a thick cloud, and shone through the cedar-bars with a yellowish hazy softness, making rosy gold of the first passion of the tide, which, writhing and straining on through many lights, grew wide upon the wonderful velvet darkness underlying the wooded banks. With the full force of a young soul that leaps from beauty seen to unimagined beauty, Emilia stood and watched the picture. Then she sat down, hushed, awaiting her lover.

Wilfrid, as it chanced, was ten minutes late. She did not hear his voice till he had sunk on his knee by her side.

'What a reverie!' he said half jealously. 'Isn't it lovely here?'

Emilia pressed his hand, but without turning her face to him, as her habit was. He took it for shyness, and encouraged her with soft exclamations and expansive tenderness.

'I wish I had not come here!' she murmured.

'Tell me why?' He folded his arm about her waist.

'Why did you let me wait?' said she.

Wilfrid drew out his watch; blamed the accident that had detained him, and remarked that there were not many minutes to witness against him.

She appeared to throw off her moodiness. 'You are here at last. Let me hold your hand, and think, and be quite silent.'

'You shall hold my hand, and think, and be quite silent, my own girl! if you will tell me what 's on your mind.'

Emilia thought it enough to look in his face, smiling.

'Has any one annoyed you?' he cried out.

'No one.'

'Then receive the command of your lord, that you kiss him.'

'I will kiss him,' said Emilia; and did so.

The salute might have appeased an imperious lord, but was not so satisfactory to an exacting lover. He perceived, however, that, whether as lover or as lord, he must wait for her now, owing to her having waited for him: so, he sat by her, permitting his hand to be softly squeezed, and trying to get at least in the track of her ideas, while her ear was turned to the weir, and her eyes were on the glowing edges of the cedar-tree.

Finally, on one of many deep breaths, she said: 'It 's over. Why were you late? But, never mind now. Never let it be long again when I am expecting you. It 's

then I feel so much at his mercy. I mean, if I am where I hear falling water; sometimes thunder.'

Wilfrid masked his complete mystification with a caressing smile; not without a growing respect for the only person who could make him experience the pangs of conscious silliness. You see, he was not a coxcomb.

'That German!' Emilia enlightened him.

'Your old music-master?'

'I wish it, I wish it! I should soon be free from him. Don't you know that dreadful man I told you about, who 's like a black angel to me, because there is no music like his? and he 's a German! I told you how I first dreamed about him, and then regularly every night, after talking with my father about Italy and his black-yellow Tedeschi, this man came over my pillow and made me call him Master, Master. And he is. He seems as if he were the master of my soul, mocking me, making me worship him in spite of my hate. I came here, thinking only of you. I heard the water like a great symphony. I fell into dreaming of my music. That 's when I am at his mercy. There 's no one like him. I must detest music to get free from him. How can I? He is like the God of music.'

Wilfrid now remembered certain of her allusions to this rival, who had hitherto touched him very little. Perhaps it was partly the lovely scene that lifted him to a spiritual jealousy, partly his susceptibility to a sentimental exaggeration, and partly the mysterious new charm in Emilia's manner, that was as a bordering lustre, showing how the full orb was rising behind her.

'His name?' Wilfrid asked for.

Emilia's lips broke to the second letter of the alphabet; but she cut short the word. 'Why should you hear it? And now that you are here, you drive him away. And the best is,' she laughed, 'I am sure *you* will not remember

any of his pieces. I wish I could not—not that it 's the memory; but he seems all round me, up in the air, and when the trees move all together . . . you chase him away, my lover!'

It was like a break in music, the way that Emilia suddenly closed her sentence; coming with a shock of flattering surprise upon Wilfrid.

Then she pursued: 'My English lover! I am like Italy, in chains to that German, and you . . . but no, no, no! It 's not quite a likeness, for my German is not a brute. I have seen his picture in shop-windows: the wind seemed in his hair, and he seemed to hear with his eyes: his forehead frowning so. Look at me, and see. So!'

Emilia pressed up the hair from her temples and bent her brows.

'It does not increase your beauty,' said Wilfrid.

'There 's the difference!' Emilia sighed mildly. 'He sees angels, cherubs, and fairies, and imps, and devils; or he hears them: they come before him from far off, in music. They do to me, now and then. Only now and then, when my head 's on fire.—My lover!'

Wilfrid pressed his mouth to the sweet instrument. She took his kiss fully, and gave her own frankly, in return. Then, sighing a very little, she said: 'Do not kiss me much.'

'Why not?'

'No!'

'But, look at me.'

'I will look at you. Only take my hand. See the moon is getting whiter. The water there is like a pool of snakes, and then they struggle out, and roll over and over, and stream on lengthwise. I can see their long flat heads, and their eyes: almost their skins. No, my lover! do not kiss me. I lose my peace.'

Wilfrid was not willing to relinquish his advantage, and the tender deep tone of the remonstrance was most musical and catching. What if he pulled her to earth from that rival of his in her soul? She would then be wholly his own. His lover's sentiment had grown rageingly jealous of the lordly German. But Emilia said, 'I have you on my heart more when I touch your hand only, and think. If you kiss me, I go into a cloud, and lose your face in my mind.'

'Yes, yes'; replied Wilfrid, pleased to sustain the argument for the sake of its fruitful promises. 'But you must submit to be kissed, my darling. You will have to.'

She gazed inquiringly.

'When you are married, I mean.'

'When will you marry me?' she said.

The heir-apparent of the house of Pole blinked probably at that moment more foolishly than most mortal men have done. Taming his astonishment to represent a smile, he remarked: 'When? are you thinking about it already?'

She answered, in a quiet voice that conveyed the fact forcibly, 'Yes.'

'But you're too young yet; and you're going to Italy, to learn in the schools. You wouldn't take a husband there with you, would you? What would the poor devil do?'

'But *you* are not too young,' said she.

Wilfrid supposed not.

'Could you not go to my Italy with me?'

'Impossible! What! as a dangling husband?' Wilfrid laughed scornfully.

'They would love you too,' she said. 'They are such loving people. Oh, come! Consent to come, my lover! I must learn. If I do not, you will despise me. How

can I bring anything to lay at your feet, my dear! my dear! if I do not?'

'Impossible!' Wilfrid reiterated, as one who had found moorings in the word.

'Then I will give up Italy!'

He had not previously acted hypocrite with this amazing girl. Nevertheless, it became difficult not to do so. He could scarcely believe that he had on a sudden, and by strange agency, slipped into an earnest situation. Emilia's attitude and tone awakened him to see it. Her hands were clenched straight down from the shoulders: all that she conceived herself to be renouncing for his sake was expressed in her face.

'Would you, really?' he murmured.

'I will!'

'And be English altogether?'

'Be yours!'

'Mine?'

'Yes; from this time.'

Now stirred his better nature: though not before had he sceptically touched her lips and found them cold, as if the fire had been taken out of them by what they had uttered. He felt that it was no animal love, but the force of a soul drawn to him; and, forgetting the hypocritical foundation he had laid, he said: 'How proud I shall be of you!'

'I shall go with you to battle,' returned Emilia.

'My little darling! You won't care to see those black fellows killed, will you?'

Emilia shuddered. 'No; poor things! Why do you hurt them? Kill wicked people, tyrant whitecoats! And we will not talk of killing now. Proud of me? If I can make you!'

'You sigh so heavily!'

'Something makes me feel like a little beggar.'

'When I tell you I love you?'

'Yes; but I only feel rich when I am giving; and I seem to have nothing to give now:—now that I have lost Italy!'

'But you give me your love, don't you?'

'All of it. But I seem to give it to you in tatters: it 's like a beggar; like a day without any sun.'

'Do you think I shall have that idea when I hear you sing to me, and know that this little leaping fountain of music here is mine?'

Dim rays of a thought led Emilia to remark, 'Must not men *kneel* to women? I mean, if they are to love them for ever?'

Wilfrid smiled gallantly: 'I will kneel to you, if it pleases you.'

'Not now. You should have done so, once, I dreamed: only once, just for a moment, in Italy; when all were crying out to me that I had caught their hearts. I fancied standing out like a bright thing in a dark crowd, and then saying "I am his!" pointing to you, and folding my arms, waiting for you to take me.'

The lover's imagination fired at the picture, and immediately he told a lover's lie; for the emotion excited by the thought of her glory coloured deliciously that image of her abnegation of all to him. He said: 'I would rather have you as you are.'

Emilia leaned to him more, and the pair fixed their eyes on the moon, that had now topped the cedar, and was pure silver: silver on the grass, on the leafage, on the waters. And in the West, facing it, was an arch of twilight and tremulous rose; as if a spirit hung there over the shrouded sun.

'At least,' thought Wilfrid, 'heaven, and the beauty of the world, approve my choice.' And he looked up, fancying that he had a courage almost serene to meet his kindred with Emilia on his arm.

She felt his arm dreamily stressing its clasp about her, and said: 'Now I know you love me. And you shall take me as I am. I need not be so poor after all. My dear! my dear! I cannot see beyond you.'

'Is that your misery?' said he.

'My delight! my pleasure! One can live a life anywhere. And how can I belong to Italy, if I am yours? Do you know, when we were silent just now, I was thinking that water was the history of the world flowing out before me, all mixed up of kings and queens, and warriors with armour, and shouting armies; battles and numbers of mixed people; and great red sunsets, with women kneeling under them. Do you know those long low sunsets? I love them. They look like blood spilt for love. The noise of the water, and the moist green smell, gave me hundreds of pictures that seemed to hug me. I thought—what could stir music in me more than this? and, am I not just as rich if I stay here with my lover, instead of flying to strange countries, that I shall not care for now? So, you shall take me as I am. I do not feel poor any longer.'

With that she gave him both her hands.

'Yes,' said Wilfrid.

As if struck by the ridicule of so feeble a note, falling upon her passionate speech, he followed it up with the 'yes!' of a man; adding: 'Whatever you are, you are my dear girl; my own love; mine!'

Having said it, he was screwed up to feel it as nearly as possible, such virtue is there in uttered words.

Then he set about resolutely studying to appreciate her in the new character she had assumed to him. It is barely to be supposed that he should understand what in her love for him she sacrificed in giving up Italy, as she phrased it. He had some little notion of the sacrifice; but, as he did not demand any sacrifice of the sort, and

as this involved a question perplexing, irritating, absurd, he did not regard it very favourably. As mistress of his fancy, her prospective musical triumphs were the crown of gold hanging over her. As wife of his bosom, they were not to be thought of. But the wife of his bosom must take her place by virtue of some wondrous charm. What was it that Emilia could show, if not music? Beautiful eyebrows: thick rare eyebrows, no doubt: couched upon her full eyes, they were a marvel: and her eyes were a marvel. She had a sweet mouth, too, though the upper lip did not boast the aristocratic conventional curve of adorable pride, or the under lip a pretty droop to a petty rounded chin. Her face was like the after-sunset across a rose-garden, with the wings of an eagle poised outspread on the light. Some such coloured, vague, magnified impression Wilfrid took of her. Still, it was not quite enough to make him scorn contempt, should it whisper: nor even quite enough to combat successfully the image of elegant dames in their chosen attitudes—the queenly moments when perhaps they enter an assembly, or pour out tea with an exquisite exhibition of arm, or recline upon a couch, commanding homage of the world of little men. What else had this girl to count upon to make her exclusive? A devoted heart; she had a loyal heart, and perfect frankness: a mind impressible, intelligent, and fresh. She gave promise of fair companionship at all seasons. She could put a spell upon him, moreover. By that power of hers, never wilfully exercised, she came, in spite of the effect left on him by her early awkwardnesses and 'animalities,' nearer to his idea of superhuman nature than anything he knew of. But how would she be regarded when the announcement of Mrs. Wilfrid Pole brought scrutinizing eyes and gossiping mouths to bear on her?

It mattered nothing. He kissed her, and the vision of

the critical world faded to a blank. Whatever she was, he was her prime luminary, so he determined to think that he cast light upon a precious, an unrivalled land.

'You are my own, are you not, Emilia?'

'Yes; I am,' she answered.

'That water seems to say "for ever,"' he murmured; and Emilia's fingers pressed upon his.

Of marriage there was no further word. Her heart was evidently quite at ease; and that it should be so without chaining him to a date, was Wilfrid's peculiar desire. He could pledge himself to eternity, but shrank from being bound to eleven o'clock on the morrow morning.

So, now, the soft Summer hours flew like white doves from off the mounting moon, and the lovers turned to go, all being still: even the noise of the waters still to their ears, as life that is muffled in sleep. They saw the cedar grey-edged under the moon: and Night, that clung like a bat beneath its ancient open palms. The bordering sward about the falls shone silvery. In its shadow was a swan. These scenes are but beckoning hands to the hearts of lovers, waving them on to that Eden which they claim: but when the hour has fled, they know it; and by the palpitating light in it they know that it holds the best of them.

CHAPTER XXI

RETURN OF MR. PERICLES

At this season Mr. Pericles reappeared. He had been, he said, through 'Paris, Turin, Milano, Veniss, and by Trieste over the Sömmering to Vienna on a tour for a

voice.' And in no part of the Continent, his vehement declaration assured the ladies, had he found a single one. It was one universal croak—ahi! And Mr. Pericles could affirm that Purgatory would have no pains for him after the torments he had recently endured. 'Zey are frogs if zey are not geese,' said Mr. Pericles. 'I give up. Opera is dead. Hein? for a time'; and he smiled almost graciously, adding: 'Where is she?' For Emilia was not present.

The ladies now perceived a greatness of mind in the Greek's devotion to music, and in his non-mercenary travels to assist managers of Opera by discovering genius. His scheme for Emilia fired them with delight. They were about to lay down all the material arrangements at once, but Mrs. Chump, who had heard that there was a new man in the house, now entered the room, prepared to conquer him. As thus, after a short form of introduction: 'D' ye do, sir! and ye 're Mr. Paricles. Oh! but ye 're a Sultan, they say. Not in morr'ls, sir. And vary pleasant to wander on the Cont'nent with a lot o' lacqueys at your heels. It 's what a bachelor can do. But I ask ye, sir, is ut fair, ye think, to the poor garls that has to stop at home?'

Hereat the ladies of Brookfield, thus miserably indicated, drew upon their self-command that sprang from the high sense of martyrdom.

Mr. Pericles did not reply to Mrs. Chump at all. He turned to Adela, saying aloud: 'What is zis person?'

It might have pleased them to hear any slight put publicly on Mrs. Chump in the first resistance to the woman, but in the present stage their pride defended her. 'Our friend,' was the reply with which Arabella rebuked his rudeness; and her sister approved her. 'We *can* avoid showing that we are weak in *our own* opinion, whatsoever degrades us,' they had said during

a consultation. Simultaneously they felt that Mr. Pericles being simply a millionaire and not In Society, being also a middle-class foreigner (a Greek whose fathers ran with naked heels and long lank hair on the shores of the Ægean), before such a man they might venture to identify this their guest with themselves: an undoubted duty, in any case, but not always to be done; at least, not with grace and personal satisfaction. Therefore, the 'our friend' dispersed a common gratulatory glow. Very small points, my masters; but how are coral-islands built?

Mrs. Chump fanned her cheek, in complete ignorance of the offence and defence. Chump, deceased, in amorous mood, had praised her management of the fan once, when breath was in him: '"Martha," says he, winkin' a sort of "mavourneen" at me, ye know—"Martha! with a fan in your hand, if ye 're not a black-eyed beauty of a Spaniard, ye little devil of Seville!" says he.' This she had occasionally confided to the ladies. The marital eulogy had touched her, and she was not a woman of coldly-flowing blood, she had an excuse for the constant employment of the fan.

'And well, Mr. Paricles! have ye got nothin' to tell us about foreign countesses and their slips? Because, we can listen, sir, garls or not. Sure, if they understand ye, ye teach 'em nothin'; and if they don't understand ye, where 's the harm done? D' ye see, sir? It 's clear in favour of talkin'.'

Mr. Pericles administered consolation to his moustache by twisting it into long waxy points. 'I do not know; I do not know,' he put her away with, from time to time. In the end Mrs. Chump leaned over to Arabella. 'Don't have 'm, my dear,' she murmured.

'You mean——?' quoth Arabella.

'Here 's the driest stick that aver stood without sap.'

Arabella flushed when she took the implication that she was looking on the man as a husband. Adela heard the remarks, and flushed likewise. Mrs. Chump eyed them both. 'It 's for the money o' the man,' she soliloquized aloud, as her fashion was. Adela jumped up, and with an easy sprightly posture of her fair, commonly studious person, and natural run of notes: 'Oh!' she cried, 'I begin to feel what it is to be like a live fish on the fire, frying, frying, frying! and if he can keep his Christian sentiments under this infliction, what a wonderful hero he must be! What a hot day!'

She moved swiftly to the door, and flung it open. A sight met her eyes at which she lost her self-possession. She started back, uttering a soft cry.

'Ah! aha! oh!' went the bitter ironic drawl of Mr. Pericles, whose sharp glance had caught the scene as well.

Emilia came forward with a face like sunset. Diplomacy, under the form of Wilfrid Pole, kicked its heels behind, and said a word or two in a tone of false cheerfulness.

'Oh! so!' Mr. Pericles frowned, while Emilia held her hand out to him. 'Yeas! You are quite well? H'm! You are burnt like a bean—hein? I shall ask you what you have been doing, by and by.'

Happily for decency, Mrs. Chump had not participated in the fact presented by ocular demonstration. She turned about comfortably to greet Wilfrid, uttering the inspired remark: 'Ye look red from a sly kiss!'

'*For* one?' said he, sharpening his blunted wits on this dull instrument.

The ladies talked down their talk. Then Wilfrid and Mr. Pericles interchanged quasi bows.

'Oh, if he doesn't show his upper teeth like an angry cat, or a leopard I 've seen!' cried Mrs. Chump in

Adela's ear, designating Mr. Pericles. 'Does he know Mr. Wilfrud's in the British army, and a new lieuten't, gazetted and all?'

Mr. Pericles certainly did not look pleasantly upon Wilfrid: Emilia received his unconcealed wrath and spite.

'Go and sing a note!' he said.

'At the piano?' Emilia quietly asked.

'At piano, harp, what you will—it is ze voice I want.'

Emilia pitched her note high from a full chest and with glad bright eyes, which her fair critics thought just one degree brazen, after the revelation in the doorway.

Mr. Pericles listened; wearing an aching expression, as if he were sending one eye to look up into his brain for a judgement disputed in that sovereign seat.

Still she held on, and then gave a tremulous, rich, contralto note.

'Oh! the human voice!' cried Adela, overcome by the transition of tones.

'Like going from the nightingale to the nightjar,' said Arabella.

Mrs. Chump remarked: 'Ye 'll not find a more susceptible woman to musuc than me.'

Wilfrid looked away. Pride coursed through his veins in a torrent.

When the voice was still, Mr. Pericles remained in a pondering posture.

'You go to play fool with zat voice in Milano, you are flogged,' he cried terribly, shaking his forefinger.

Wilfrid faced round in wrath, but Mr. Pericles would not meet his challenge, continuing: 'You hear? Sandra Belloni, you hear?—so!' and Mr. Pericles brought the palms of his hands in collision.

'Marcy, man!' Mrs. Chump leaped from her chair;

'd' ye mean that those horrud forr'ners 'll smack a full-grown young woman?—Don't go to 'm, my dear. Now, take my 'dvice, little Belloni, and don't go. It isn't the sting o' the smack, ye know——'

'Shall I sing anything to you?' Emilia addressed Mr. Pericles. The latter shrugged to express indifference. Nevertheless she sang. She had never sung better. Mr. Pericles clutched his chin in one hand, elbow on knee. The ladies sighed to think of the loss of homage occasioned by the fact of so few being present to hear her. Wilfrid knew himself the fountain of it all, and stood fountain-like, in a shower of secret adulation: a really happy fellow. This: that his beloved should be the centre of eyes, and pronounced exquisite by general approbation, besides subjecting him to a personal spell: this was what he wanted. It was mournful to think that Circumstance had not at the same time created the girl of noble birth, or with an instinct for spiritual elegance. But the world is imperfect.

Presently he became aware that she was understood to be singing pointedly to him: upon which he dismissed the council of his sensations, and began to diplomatize cleverly. Leaning over to Adela, he whispered: 'Pericles wants her to go to Italy. My belief is, that she won't.'

'And why?' returned Adela, archly reproachful.

'Well, we 've been spoiling her a little, perhaps. I mean, we men, of course. But, I really don't think that I 'm chiefly to blame. You won't allow Captain Gambier to be in fault, I know.'

'Why not?' said Adela.

'Well, if you will, then he is the principal offender.'

Adela acted disbelief; but, unprepared for her brother's perfectly feminine audacity of dissimulation, she thought: '*He* can't be in earnest about the girl,' and was led to

fancy that Gambier might, and to determine to see whether it was so.

By this manœuvre, Wilfrid prepared for himself a defender when the charge was brought against him.

Mr. Pericles was thunderstruck on hearing Emilia refuse to go to Italy. A scene of tragic denunciation on the one hand, and stubborn decision on the other, ensued.

'I shall not mind zis' (he spoke of Love and the awakening of the female heart) 'not when you are trained. It is good, zen, and you have fire from it. But, now! little fool, I say, it is too airly—too airly! How shall you learn—eh? with your brain upon a man? And your voice, little fool, a thing of caprice, zat comes and goes as he will, not you will. Hein? like a barrel-organ, which he turns ze handle.—Mon Dieu! Why did I leave her?' Mr. Pericles struck his brow with his wrist, clutching at the long thin slice of hair that did greasy duty for the departed crop on his poll. 'Did I not know it was a woman? And so you are, what you say, in lofe.'

Emilia replied: 'I have not said so,' with exasperating coolness.

'You have your eye on a man. And I know him, zat man! When he is tired of you—whiff, away you go, a puff of smoke! And you zat I should make a Queen of Opéra! A Queen? You shall have more rule zan twenty Queens—forty! See' (Mr. Pericles made his hand go like an aspen-leaf from his uplifted wrist); 'so you shall set ze hearts of sossands! To dream of you, to adore you! and flowers, flowers everywhere, on your head, at your feet. You choose your lofer from ze world. A husband, if it is your taste. Bose, if you please. Zen, I say, you shall, you shall lofe a man. Let him tease and sting—ah! it will be

magnifique: Aha! ze voice will sharpen, go deep; yeas! to be a tale of blood. Lofe till you could stab yourself:—Brava! But now? Little fool, I say!'

Emilia believed that she was verily forfeiting an empire. Her face wore a soft look of delight. This renunciation of a splendid destiny for Wilfrid's sake, seemed to make her worthier of him, and as Mr. Pericles unrolled the list of her rejected treasures, her bosom heaved without a regret.

'Ha!' Mr. Pericles flung away from her: 'go and be a little gutter-girl!'

The musical connoisseur drew on his own disappointment alone for eloquence. Had he been thinking of her, he might have touched cunningly on her love for Italy. Music was the passion of the man; and a millionaire's passion is something that can make a stir. He knew that in Emilia he had discovered a pearl of song rarely to be found, and his object was to polish and perfect her at all cost: perhaps, as a secondary and far removed consideration, to point to her as a thing belonging to him, for which Emperors might envy him. The thought of losing her drove him into fits of rage. He took the ladies one by one, and treated them each to a horrible scene of gesticulation and outraged English. He accused their brother of conduct which they were obliged to throw (by a process of their own) into the region of Fine Shades, before they dared venture to comprehend him. Gross facts in relationship with the voice, this grievous 'machine, not man,'—as they said —stated to them, harshly, impetuously. The ladies felt that he had bored their ears with hot iron pins. Adela tried laughter as a defence from his suggestion against Wilfrid, but had shortly afterwards to fly from the fearful anatomist. She served her brother thoroughly in the Council of Three; so that Mr. Pericles was led

by them to trust that there had been mere fooling in his absence, and that the emotions he looked to as the triumphant reserve in Emilia's bosom, to be aroused at some crisis when she was before the world, slumbered still. She, on her part, contrasting her own burning sensations with this quaint, innocent devotion to Art and passion for music, felt in a manner guilty; and whenever he stormed with additional violence, she became suppliant, and seemed to bend and have regrets. Mr. Pericles would then say, with mollified irritability: 'You will come to Italy to-morrow?—Ze day after?—not at all?' The last was given with a roar, for lack of her immediate response. Emilia would find a tear on her eyelids at times. Surround herself as she might with her illusions, she had no resting-place in Wilfrid's heart, and knew it. She knew it as the young know that they are to die on a future day, without feeling the sadness of it, but with a dimly prevalent idea that this life is therefore incomplete. And again her blood, as with a wave of rich emotion, washed out the blank spot. She thought: 'What can he want but my love?' And thus she satisfied her own hungry questioning by seeming to supply an answer to his.

The ladies of Brookfield by no means encouraged Emilia to refuse the generous offer of Mr. Pericles. They thought, too, that she might—might she? Oh! certainly she might go to Italy under his protection. 'Would you let one of your blood?' asked Wilfrid brutally. With some cunning he led them to admit that Emilia's parents should rightly be consulted in such a case.

One day Mr. Pericles said to the ladies: 'I shall give a fête: a party monstre. In ze air: on grass. I beg you to invite friends of yours.'

Before the excogitation of this splendid resolve, he

had been observed to wear for some period a conspiratorial aspect. When it was delivered, and Arabella had undertaken the management of the 'party monstre'—(which was to be on Besworth Lawn, and, as it was not their own party, could be conducted with a sort of quasi-contemptuous superiority to incongruous gatherings)—this being settled, the forehead of Mr. Pericles cleared and he ceased to persecute Emilia.

'I am not one that is wopped,' he said significantly; nodding to his English hearers, as if this piece of shrewd acquaintance with the expressive mysteries of their language placed them upon equal terms.

It was really 'a providential thing' (as devout people phrase it) that Laura Tinley and Mabel Copley should call shortly after this, and invite the ladies to a proposed picnic of theirs on Besworth Lawn. On Besworth Lawn, of all places! and they used the word 'picnic.'

'A word suggestive of gnawed drumstick and ginger-beer bottles.' Adela quoted some scapegoat of her acquaintance, as her way was when she wished to be pungent without incurring the cold sisterly eye of reproof for a vulgarism.

Both Laura and Mabel, when they heard of the mighty entertainment fixed for Besworth Lawn by Mr. Pericles, looked down. They were invited, and looked up. There was the usual amount of fencing with the combative Laura, who gave ground at all points, and as she was separating, said (so sweetly!) 'Of course you have heard of the arrest of your—what does one call him?—friend?—or a French word?'

'You mean——?' quoth Arabella.

'That poor, neatly brushed, nice creature whom you patronized—who played the organ!' she jerked to Arabella's dubious eyes.

'And he?' Arabella smiled complacently.

'Then perhaps you may know that all is arranged for him?' said Laura, interpreting by the look more than the word, after a habit of women.

'Indeed, to tell you the truth, I know nothing,' said Arabella.

'Really?' Laura turned sharply to Cornelia, who met her eyes and did not exhibit one weak dimple.

The story was, that Mr. Chips, the Bookseller of Hillford, objected to the departure of Mr. Barrett, until Mr. Barrett had paid the bill of Mr. Chips: and had signified his objection in the form of a writ. 'When, if you know anything of law,' said Laura, 'you will see why he remains. For, a writ once served, you are a prisoner. That is, I believe, if it 's above twenty pounds. And Mr. Chips' bill against Mr. Barrett was, I have heard, twenty-three pounds and odd shillings. Could anything be more preposterous? And Mr. Chips deserves to lose his money!'

Ah! to soar out of such a set as this, of which Laura Tinley is a sample, are not some trifling acts of inhumanity and practices in the art of 'cutting' permissible? So the ladies had often asked of the Unseen in their onward course, if they did not pointedly put the question now. Surely they had no desire to give pain, but the nature that endowed them with a delicate taste, inspired them to defend it. They listened gravely to Laura, who related that not only English books, but foreign (repeated and emphasized), had been supplied by Mr. Chips to Mr. Barrett.

They were in the library, and Laura's eyes rested on certain yellow and blue covers of books certainly not designed for the reading of Mr. Pole.

'I think you must be wrong as to Mr. Barrett's position,' said Adela.

'No, dear; not at all,' Laura was quick to reply. 'Unless you *know* anything. He has stated that he awaits money remittances. He has, in fact, overrun the constable, and my brother Albert says, the constable is very likely to overrun *him*, in consequence. Only a joke! But an organist with, at the highest computation—poor absurd thing!—fifty-five pounds per annum: additional for singing lessons, it is true,—but an organist with a bookseller's bill of twenty-three pounds! Consider!'

'Foreign books, too!' interjected Adela.

'Not so particularly improving to his morals, either!' added Laura.

'You are severe upon the greater part of the human race,' said Arabella.

'So are the preachers, dear,' returned Laura.

'The men of our religion justify you?' asked Arabella.

'Let me see;—where were we?' Laura retreated in an affected mystification.

'You had reached the enlightened belief that books written by any but English hands were necessarily destructive of men's innocence,' said Arabella; and her sisters thrilled at the neatness of the stroke, for the moment, while they forgot the ignoble object it transfixed. Laura was sufficiently foiled by it to be unable to return to the Chips-Barrett theme. Throughout the interview Cornelia had maintained a triumphant posture, superior to Arabella's skill in fencing, seeing that it exposed no weak point of the defence by making an attack, and concealed especially the confession implied by a relish for the conflict. Her sisters considerately left her to recover herself, after this mighty exercise of silence.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PITFALL OF SENTIMENT

Cornelia sat with a clenched hand. 'You are rich and he is poor,' was the keynote of her thoughts, repeated from minute to minute. 'And it is gold gives you the right in the world's eye to despise him!' she apostrophized the vanished Laura, clothing gold with all the baseness of that person. Now, when one really hates gold, one is at war with one's fellows. The tide sets that way. There is no compromise: to hate it is to try to stem the flood. It happens that this is one of the temptations of the sentimentalist, who should reflect, but does not, that the fine feelers by which the iniquities of gold are so keenly discerned, are a growth due to it, nevertheless. Those 'fine feelers,' or antennæ of the senses, come of sweet ease; that is synonymous with gold in our island-latitude. The sentimentalists are represented by them among the civilized species. It is they that sensitively touch and reject, touch and select; whereby the laws of the polite world are ultimately regulated, and civilization continually advanced, sometimes ridiculously. The sentimentalists are ahead of us, not by weight of brain, but through delicacy of nerve, and, like all creatures in the front, they are open to be victims. I pray you to observe again the shrinking life that afflicts the adventurous horns of the snail, for example. Such are the sentimentalists to us—the fat body of mankind. We owe them much, and though they scorn us, let us pity them.

Especially when they are young they deserve pity, for they suffer cruelly. I for my part prefer to see boys

and girls led into the ways of life by nature; but I admit that in many cases, in most cases, our good mother has not (occupied as her hands must be) made them perfectly presentable; by which fact I am warned to have tolerance for the finer beings who labour under these excessive sensual subtleties. I perceive their uses. And they are right good comedy; for which I may say that I almost love them. Man is the laughing animal: and at the end of an infinite search, the philosopher finds himself clinging to laughter as the best of human fruit, purely human, and sane, and comforting. So let us be cordially thankful to those who furnish matter for sound embracing laughter.

Cornelia detested gold—entirely on general grounds and for abstract reasons. Not a word of Mr. Barrett was shaped, even in fancy; but she interjected to herself, with meditative eye and mouth: 'The saints were poor!' (the saints of whom he had read, translating from that old Latin book)—'St. Francis! how divine was his life!' and so forth, until the figure of Mr. Penniless Barrett walked out in her imagination clad in saintly garments, superior not only to his creditor, Mr. Chips, but to all who bought or sold.

'I have been false,' she said; implying the 'to him.' Seeing him on that radiant height above her, she thought: 'How could I have fallen so?' It was impossible for her mind to recover the delusion which had prompted her signing herself to bondage—pledging her hand to a man she did not love. Could it have been that she was guilty of the immense folly, simply to escape from that piece of coarse earth, Mrs. Chump? Cornelia smiled sadly, saying: 'Oh, no! I should not have committed a wickedness for so miserable an object.' Despairing for a solution of the puzzle, she cried out, 'I was mad!'

and with a gasp of horror saw herself madly signing her name to perdition.

'I was mad!' is a comfortable cloak to our sins in the past. Mournful to think that we have been bereft of reason; but the fit is over, and we are not in Bedlam!

Cornelia next wrestled with the pride of Mr. Barrett. Why had he not come to her once after reading the line pencilled in the book? Was it that he *would* make her his debtor in everything? He could have reproached her justly; why had he held aloof? She thirsted to be scourged by him, to hang her head ashamed under his glance, and hug the bitter pain he dealt her. Revolving how the worst man on earth would have behaved to a girl partially in his power (hands had been permitted to be pressed, and the gateways of the eyes had stood open: all but vows had been interchanged), she came to regard Mr. Barrett as the best man on the earth. That she alone saw it, did not depreciate the value of her knowledge. A goal gloriously illumined blazed on her from the distance. 'Too late!' she put a curb on the hot courses in her brain, and they being checked, turned all at once to tears and came in a flood. How indignant would the fair sentimentalist have been at a whisper of her caring for the thing before it was too late!

Cornelia now daily trod the red pathways under the firs, and really imagined herself to be surprised, even vexed, when she met Mr. Barrett there at last. Emilia was by his side, near a drooping birch. She beckoned to Cornelia, whose North Pole armour was doing its best to keep down a thumping heart.

'We are taking our last walk in the old wood,' said Mr. Barrett, admirably collected. 'That is, I must speak for myself.'

'You leave early?' Cornelia felt her throat rattle hideously.

'In two days, I expect—I hope,' said he.

'Why does he hope?' thought Cornelia, wounded, until a vision of the detaining Chips struck her with pity and remorse.

She turned to Emilia. 'Our dear child is also going to leave us.'

'I?' cried Emilia, fierily out of languor.

'Does not your Italy claim you?'

'I am nothing to Italy any more. Have I not said so? I love England now.'

Cornelia smiled complacently. 'Let us hope your heart is capacious enough to love both.'

'Then your theory is' (Mr. Barrett addressed Cornelia in the winning old style), 'that the love of one thing enlarges the heart for another?'

'Should it not?' She admired his cruel self-possession pitiably, as she contrasted her own husky tones with it.

Emilia looked from one to the other, fancying that they must have her case somewhere in prospect, since none could be unconscious of the vehement struggle going on in her bosom; but they went farther and farther off from her comprehension, and seemed to speak of bloodless matters. 'And yet he is her lover,' she thought. 'When they meet they talk across a river, and he knows she is going to another man, and does not gripe her wrist and drag her away!' The sense that she had no kinship with such flesh shut her mouth faster than Wilfrid's injunctions (which were ordinarily conveyed in too subtle a manner for her to feel their meaning enough to find them binding). Cornelia, for a mask to her emotions, gave Emilia a gentle, albeit high-worded lecture on the artist's duty toward Art,

quoting favourite passages from Mr. Barrett's favourite Art-critic. And her fashion of dropping her voice as she declaimed the more dictatorial sentences (to imply, one might guess, by a show of personal humility that she would have you to know her preaching was vicarious; that she stood humbly in the pulpit, and was but a vessel for the delivery of the burden of the oracle), all this was beautiful to him who could see it. I cannot think it was wholesome for him; nor that Cornelia was unaware of a naughty wish to glitter temporarily in the eyes of the man who made her feel humble. The sorcery she sent through his blood communicated itself to hers. When she had done, Emilia, convincedly vanquished by big words, said, 'I cannot talk,' and turned heavily from them without bestowing a smile upon either.

Cornelia believed that the girl would turn back as abruptly as she had retreated; and it was not until Emilia was out of sight that she remembered the impropriety of being alone with Mr. Barrett. The Pitfall of Sentiment yawned visible, but this lady's strength had been too little tried for her to lack absolute faith in it. So, out of deep silences, the two leapt to speech and immediately subsided to the depths again: as on a sultry summer's day fishes flash their tails in the sunlight and leave a solitary circle widening on the water.

Then Cornelia knew what was coming. In set phrase, and as one who performs a duty frigidly pleasant, he congratulated her on her rumored union. One hand was in his buttoned coat; the other hung elegantly loose: not a feature betrayed emotion. He might have spoken it in a ballroom. To Cornelia, who exulted in self-compression, after the Roman method, it was more dangerous than a tremulous tone.

'You know me too well to say this, Mr. Barrett.'

The words would come. She preserved her steadfast

air, when they had escaped, to conceal her shame. Seeing thus much, he took it to mean that it was a time for plain-speaking. To what end, he did not ask.

'You have not to be told that I desire your happiness above all earthly things,' he said: and the lady shrank back, and made an effort to recover her footing. Had he not been so careful to obliterate any badge of the Squire of low degree, at his elbows, cuffs, collar, kneecap, and head-piece, she might have achieved it with better success. For cynicism (the younger brother of sentiment and inheritor of the family property) is always on the watch to deal fatal blows through such vital parts as the hat or the H's, or indeed any sign of inferior estate. But Mr. Barrett was armed at all points by a consummate education and a most serviceable clothes-brush.

'You know how I love this neighbourhood!' said she.

'And I! above all that I have known!'

They left the pathway and walked on mosses—soft yellow beds, run over with grey lichen, and plots of emerald in the midst.

'You will not fall off with your reading?' he recommenced.

She answered 'Yes,' meaning 'No'; and corrected the error languidly, thinking one of the weighty monosyllables as good as the other: for what was reading to her now?

'It would be ten thousand pities if you were to do as so many women do, when . . . when they make these great changes,' he continued.

'Of what avail is the improvement of the mind?' she said, and followed his stumble over the 'when,' and dropped on it.

'Of what avail! Is marriage to stop *your* intellectual growth?'

'Without sympathy,' she faltered, and was shocked at what she said; but it seemed a necessity.

'You must learn to conquer the need for it.'

Alas! his admonition only made her feel the need more cravingly.

'Promise me one thing,' he said. 'You will not fall into the rut? Let me keep the ideal you have given me. For the sake of heaven, do not cloud for me the one bright image I hold! Let me know always that you are *growing*, and that the pure, noble intelligence which distinguishes you advances, and will not be subdued.'

Cornelia smiled faintly. 'You have judged me too generously, Mr. Barrett.'

'Too little so! might I tell you——!' He stopped short, and she felt the silence like a great wave sweeping over her.

They were nearing the lake, with the stump of the pollard-willow in sight, and toward it they went.

'I shall take the consolation of knowing that I shall hear of you, some day,' she said, having recourse to a look of cheerfulness.

He knew her to allude to certain hopes of fame. 'I am getting wiser, I fear—too wise for ambition!'

'That is a fallacy, a sophism.'

He pointed to the hollow tree. 'Is there promise of fruit from that?'

'You . . . you are young, Mr. Barrett.'

'And on a young forehead it may be written, "*Come not to gather more.*"'

Cornelia put her hand out: 'Oh, Mr. Barrett! unsay it!' The nakedness of her spirit stood forth in a stinging tear. 'The words were cruel.'

'But, if they live, and are?'

'I feel that you must misjudge me. When I wrote them . . . you cannot know! The misery of our domestic life was so bitter! And yet, I have no excuse, none! I can only ask for pity.'

'And if you are wretched, must not I be? You pluck from me my last support. This, I petitioned Providence to hear from you—that you would be happy! I can have no comfort but in that.'

'Happy!' Cornelia murmured the word musically, as if to suck an irony from the sweetness of the sound. 'Are we made for happiness?'

Mr. Barrett quoted the favourite sage, concluding: 'But a brilliant home and high social duties bring consolation. I do acknowledge that an eminent station will not only be graced by you, but that you give the impression of being born to occupy it. It is your destiny.'

'A miserable destiny!'

It pleased Cornelia to become the wilful child who quarrels with its tutor's teachings, upon this point.

Then Mr. Barrett said quickly: 'Your heart is not in this union?'

'Can you ask? I have done my duty.'

'Have you, indeed!'

His tone was severe in the deliberation of its accents.

Was it her duty to live an incomplete life? He gave her a definition of personal duty, and shadowed out all her own ideas on the subject; seeming thus to speak terrible, unanswerable truth.

As one who changes the theme, he said: 'I have forborne to revert to myself in our interviews; they were too divine for that. You will always remember that I have forborne much.'

'Yes!' She was willing at the instant to confess how much.

'And if I speak now, I shall not be misinterpreted?'

'You never would have been, by me.'

'Cornelia!'

Though she knew what was behind the door, this flinging of it open with her name startled the lady; and if he had faltered, it would not have been well for him. But, plainly, he claimed the right to call her by her Christian name. She admitted it; and thenceforward they were equals.

It was an odd story that he told of himself. She could not have repeated it to make it comprehensible. She drank at every sentence, getting no more from it than the gratification of her thirst. His father, at least, was a man of title, a baronet. What was meant by estates not entailed? What wild freak of fate put this noble young man in the power of an eccentric parent, who now caressed him, now made him an outcast? She heard of the sum that was his, coming from his dead mother to support him—just one hundred pounds annual! Was ever fate so mournful?

Practically, she understood that if Mr. Barrett would write to his father, pledging himself to conform to his mysterious despotic will in something, he would be pardoned and reinstated.

He concluded: 'Hitherto I have preferred poverty. You have taught me at what a cost! Is it too late?'

The fall of his voice, with the repetition of her name, seemed as if awakening her, but not in a land of reason.

'Why . . . why!' she whispered.

'Beloved?'

'Why did you not tell me this before?'

'Do you upbraid me?'

'Oh, no! Oh, never!' she felt his hand taking hers gently. 'My friend,' she said, half in self-defence; and they, who had never kissed as lovers, kissed under the plea of friendship.

CHAPTER XXIII

WILFRID DIPLOMATIZES

All Wilfrid's diplomacy was now brought into play to baffle Mr. Pericles, inspire Emilia with the spirit of secresy, and carry on his engagement to two women to their common satisfaction. Adela, whose penetration he dreaded most, he had removed by a flattering invitation to Stornley; and that Emilia might be occupied during his absences, and Mr. Pericles thrown on a false scent, he persuaded Tracy Runningbrook to come to Brookfield, and write libretti for Emilia's operas. The two would sit down together for an hour, drawing wonderful precocious noses upon juvenile visages, when Emilia would sigh and say: 'I can't work!'—Tracy adding, with resignation: 'I never can!' At first Mr. Pericles dogged them assiduously. After a little while he shrugged, remarking: 'It is a nonsense.'

They were, however, perfectly serious about the production of an opera, Tracy furnishing verse to Emilia's music. He wrote with extraordinary rapidity, but clung to graphic phrases, that were not always supple enough for nuptials with modulated notes. Then Emilia had to hit his sense of humour by giving the words as they came in the run of the song. 'You make me crow, or I croak,' she said.

'The woman follows the man, and music fits to verse,' cried Tracy. 'Music 's the vine, verse the tree.'

Emilia meditated. 'Not if they grow up together,' she suggested, and broke into a smile at his rapture of amusement; which was succeeded by a dark perplexity, worthy of the present aspect of Mr. Pericles.

'That 's what has upset us,' he said. 'We have been trying to "grow up together," like first-cousins, and nature forbids the banns. To-morrow you shall have half a libretto. And then, really, my child, you must adapt yourself to the words.'

'I will,' Emilia promised; 'only, not if they 're like iron to the teeth.'

'My belief is,' said Tracy savagely, 'that music 's a fashion, and as delusive a growth as Cobbett's potatoes, which will go back to the deadly nightshade, just as music will go back to the tom-tom.'

'What have you called out when I sang to you!' Emilia reproached him for this irreverent nonsense.

'Oh! it was you and not the music,' he returned half-cajolingly, while he beat the tom-tom on air.

'Hark here!' cried Emilia. She recited a verse. 'Doesn't that sound dead? Now hark!' She sang the verse, and looked confidently for Tracy's verdict at the close.

'What a girl that is!' He went about the house, raving of her to everybody, with sundry Gallic interjections; until Mrs. Chump said: ' 'Deed, sir, ye don't seem to have much idea of a *woman's* feelin's.'

Tracy produced in a night two sketches of libretti for Emilia to choose from—the Roman Clelia being one, and Camillus the other. Tracy praised either impartially, and was indifferent between them, he told her. Clelia offered the better theme for passionate song, but there was a winning political object and rebuff to be given

to Radicalism in Camillus. 'Think of Rome!' he said.

Emilia gave the vote for Camillus, beginning forthwith to hum, with visions of a long roll of swarthy cavalry, headed by a clear-eyed young chief, sunlight perching on his helm.

'Yes; but you don't think of the situations in Clelia, and what I can do with her,' snapped Tracy. 'I see a song there that would light up all London. Unfortunately, the sentiment 's dead Radical. It wouldn't so much matter if we were certain to do Camillus as well; because one would act as a counterpoise to the other, you know. Well, follow your own fancy. Camillus is strictly classical. I treat opera there as Alfieri conceived tragedy. Clelia is modern style. Cast the die for Camillus, and let 's take horse. Only, we lose the love-business—exactly where I show my strength. Clelia in the camp of the king: dactyllic chorus-accompaniment, while she, in heavy voluptuous anapæsts, confesses her love for the enemy of her country. Remember, this is our romantic opera, where we do what we like with History, and make up our minds for asses telling us to go home and read our "Student's Rome." Then that scene where she and the king dance the dactyls, and the anapæsts go to the chorus. Sublime! Let 's go into the woods and begin. We might give the first song or two to-night. In composition, mind, always strike out your great scene, and work from it—don't work up to it, or you 've lost fire when you reach the point. That 's my method.'

They ran into the woods, skipping like schoolboy and schoolgirl. On hearing that Camillus would not be permitted to love other than his ungrateful country, Emilia's conception of the Roman lord grew pale, and a controversy ensued—she maintaining that a great hero

must love a woman; he declaring that a great hero might love a dozen, but that it was beneath the dignity of this drama to allow of a rival to Rome in Camillus's love.

'He will not do for music,' said Emilia firmly, and was immoveable. In despair, Tracy proposed attaching a lanky barbarian daughter to Brennus, whose deeds of arms should provoke the admiration of the Roman.

'And so we relinquish Alfieri for Florian! There 's a sentimental burlesque at once!' the youth ejaculated, in gloom. 'I chose this subject entirely to give you Rome for a theme.'

Emilia took his hand. 'I do thank you. If Brennus has a daughter, why not let her be half Roman?'

Tracy fired out: 'She 's a bony woman, with a brawny development; mammoth haunches, strong of the skeleton; cheek-bones, flat-forward, as a fish 's rotting on a beach; long scissor lips—nippers to any wretched rose of a kiss! a pugilist's nose to the nostrils of a phoca; and eyes!—don't you see them?—luminaries of pestilence; blotted yellow, like a tallow candle shining through a horny lantern.'

At this horrible forced-poetic portrait, Emilia cried in pain: 'You hate her suddenly!'

'I loathe the creature—pah!' went Tracy.

'Why do you make her so hideous?' Emilia complained. 'I feel myself hating her too. Look at me. Am I such a thing as that?'

'You!' Tracy was melted in a trice, and gave the motion of hugging, as a commentary on his private opinion.

'Can you also be sure that Camillus can love nothing but his country? Would one love stop the other?' she persisted, gazing with an air of steady anxiety for the answer.

'There isn't a doubt about it,' said Tracy.

Emilia caught her face in her hands, and exclaimed in a stifling voice: 'It 's true! it 's true!'

Tracy saw that her figure was shaken with sobs—unmistakeable, hard, sorrowful convulsions.

'Confound historical facts that make her cry!' he murmured to himself, in a fury at the Roman fables. 'It 's no use comforting her with Niebuhr now. She 's got a live Camillus in her brain, and there he 'll stick.' Tracy began to mutter the emphatic D.; quite cognizant of her case, as he supposed. This intensity of human emotion about a dry faggot of history by no means surprised him; and he was as tender to the grief of his darling little friend as if he had known the conflict that tore her in two. Subsequently he related the incident, in a tone of tender delight, to Wilfrid, whom it smote. 'Am I a brute?' asked the latter of the Intelligences in the seat of his consciousness, and they for the moment gravely affirmed it. I have observed that when young men obtain this mental confirmation of their suspicions, they wax less reluctant to act as brutes than when the doubt restrained them.

He reasoned thus: 'I can bring my mind to the idea of losing her, if it must be so.' (*Hear, hear!* from the unanimous internal Parliament.) 'But I can't make her miserable (*cheers*)—I can't go and break her heart' (*loud cheers*, drowning a faint dissentient hum).—The scene, of which Tracy had told him, gave Wilfrid a kind of dread of the girl. If that was her state of feeling upon a distant subject, how would it be when he applied the knife. Simply, impossible to use the knife at all! Wield it thou, O Circumstance, babe-munching Chronos, whosoever thou art, that jarrest our poor human music effectually from hour to hour!

Colonel Pierson paid his promised visit, on his way

back to his quarters at Verona. His stay was shortened by rumours of anticipated troubles in Italy. One day at table he chanced to observe, speaking of the Milanese, that they required another lesson, and that it would save the shedding of blood if, annually, the chief men of the city took a flogging for the community (senseless arrogance that sensible, and even kindly, men will sometimes be tempted to utter, and prompted to act on, in that deteriorating state of a perpetual repressive force).—Emilia looked at him till she caught his eye: 'I hope I shall never meet you there,' she said.

The colonel coloured, and drew his finger along each curve of his moustache. The table was silent. Colonel Pierson was a gentleman, but a false position and the irritating topic deprived him of proper self-command.

'What would you do?' he said, not gallantly.

Emilia would have been glad to have been allowed to subside, but the tone stung her.

'I could not do much; I am a woman,' said she.

Whereto the colonel: 'It 's only the women who do anything over there.'

'And that is why you flog them!'

The colonel, seeing himself surrounded by ladies, lost the right guidance of his wits, at this point, reddened, and was saved by an Irish outcry of horror from some unpleasant and possibly unmanly retort. 'Mr. Paricles said exactly the same. Oh, sir! do ye wear an officer's uniform to go about behavin' in that shockin' way to poor helpless females?'

This was the first time Mrs. Chump had ever been found of service at the Brookfield dining-table. Colonel Pierson joined the current smile, and the matter passed.

He was affectionate with Wilfrid, and invited him to Verona, with the assurance that his (the Austrian) school of cavalry was the best in the world. 'You beat

us in pace and weight; but you can't skirmish, you can't manage squadrons, and you know nothing of outpost duty,' said the colonel. Wilfrid promised to visit him some day: a fact he denied to Emilia, when she charged him with it. Her brain seemed to be set on fire by the presence of an Austrian officer. The miserable belief that she had abandoned her country pressing on her remorsefully, she lost appetite, briskness of eye, and the soft reddish-brown ripe blood-hue that made her cheeks sweet to contemplate. She looked worn, small, wretched: her very walk indicated self-contempt. Wilfrid was keen to see the change for which others might have accused a temporary headache. Now that she appeared under this blight, it seemed easier to give her up; and his magnanimity being thus encouraged (I am not hard on him—remember the constitution of love, in which a heart unaroused is pure selfishness, and a heart aroused heroic generosity; they being one heart to outer life)—his magnanimity, I say, being under this favourable sun, he said to himself that there should be an end of double-dealing; and, possibly consoled by feeling a martyr, he persuaded himself to act the gentle ruffian. To which end, he was again absent from Brookfield, for a space, and bitterly missed.

Emilia, for the last two Sundays, had taken Mr. Barrett's place at the organ. She was playing the prelude to one of the evening hymns, when the lover, whose features she dreaded to be once more forgetting, appeared in the curtained enclosure. A stoppage in the tune, and a prolonged squeal of the instrument, gave the congregation below matter to speculate upon. Wilfrid put up his finger and sat reverently down, while Emilia plunged tremblingly at the note that was howling its life away. And as she managed to swim into the stream of the sacred melody again, her head was turned

toward her lover under a new sensation; and the first words she murmured were, 'We have never been in church together, before.'

'Not in the evening,' he whispered, likewise impressed.

'No,' said Emilia softly; flattered by his greater accuracy.

If Wilfrid could have been sure that he would be perfect master of that sentimental crew known to him under the denomination of his feelings, the place he selected for their parting interview might be held creditable to this young officer's acknowledged strategical ability. It was a place where any fervid appeals were impossible; where he could contemplate her, listen to her, be near her, alone with her, having nothing to dread from tears, supplications, or passion, as a consequence of the short indulgence of his tenderness. But he had failed to reckon on the chances that he himself might prove weak and be betrayed by the crew for whose comfort he was always providing; and now, as she sat there, her face being sideways to him, the flush of delight faint on her cheek, and her eyelids half raised to the gilded pipes, while full and sonorous harmony rolled out from her touch, it seemed the very chorus of the heavens that she commanded, and a subtle misty glory descended upon her forehead, which he was long in perceiving to be cast from a moisture on his eyelids.

When the sermon commenced, Emilia quitted the organ and took his hand. In very low whispers, they spoke:—

'I have wanted to see you so!'

'You see me now, little woman.'

'On Friday week next I am to go away.'

'Nonsense! You shall not.'

'Your sisters say, yes! Mr. Pericles has got my father's consent, they say, to take me to Italy.'

'Do you think of going?'

Emilia gazed at her nerveless hands lying in her lap.

'You shall not go!' he breathed imperiously in her ear.

'Then you will marry me quite soon?' And Emilia looked as if she would be smiling April, at a word.

'My dear girl!' he had an air of caressing remonstrance.

'Because,' she continued, 'if my father finds me out, I must go to Italy, or go to that life of torment in London—seeing those Jew-people—horrible!—or others: and the thought of it is like being under the earth, tasting bitter gravel! I could almost bear it before you kissed me, my lover! It would kill me now. Say! say! Tell me we shall be together. I shudder all day and night, and feel frozen hands catching at me. I faint—my heart falls deep down, in the dark . . . I think I know what dying is now!'

She stopped on a tearless sob; and, at her fingers' ends, Wilfrid felt the quivering of her frame.

'My darling!' he interjected. He wished to explain the situation to her, as he then conceived it. But he had, in his calculation, failed also to count on a peculiar nervous fretfulness, that the necessity to reiterate an explanation in whispers must superinduce. So, when Emilia looked vacant of the intelligence imparted to her, he began anew, and emphatically; and ere he was half through it, Mr. Marter, from the pulpit underneath, sent forth a significant reprimand to the conscience of a particular culprit of his congregation, in the form of a solemn cough. Emilia had to remain unenlightened, and she proceeded to build on her previous assumption; doing the whispering easily and sweetly; in the prettiest way from her tongue's tip, with her chin lifted up; and sending the vowels on a prolonged hushed breath, that

seemed to print them on the hearing far more distinctly than a volume of sound. Wilfrid fell back on monosyllables. He could not bring his mouth to utter flinty negatives, so it appeared that he assented; and then his better nature abused him for deluding her. He grew utterly ashamed of his aimless selfish double-dealing. 'Can it be?' he questioned his own mind, and listened greedily to any mental confirmations of surpassing excellence in her, that the world might possibly acknowledge. Having, with great zeal, created a set of circumstances, he cursed them heartily, after the fashion of little people. He grew resigned to abandon Lady Charlotte, and to give his name to this subduing girl; but a comfortable quieting sensation came over him, at the thought that his filial duty stood in the way. His father, he knew, was anxious for him to marry into a noble family—incomprehensibly anxious to have the affair settled; and, as two or three scenes rose in his mind, Wilfrid perceived that the obstacle to his present fancy was his father.

As clearly as he could, with the dread of the preacher's admonishing cough before him, Wilfrid stated the case to Emilia; saying that he loved her with his whole heart; but that the truth was, his father was not in a condition of health to bear contradiction to his wishes, and would, he was sure, be absolutely opposed to their union. He brought on himself another reprimand from Mr. Marter, in seeking to propitiate Emilia's reason to comprehend the position rightly; and could add little more to the fact he had spoken, than that his father had other views, which it would require time to combat.

Emilia listened attentively, replying with a flying glance to the squeeze of his hand. He was astonished to see her so little disconcerted. But now the gradual fall of Mr. Marter's voice gave them warning.

'My lover?' breathed Emilia, hurriedly and eagerly; questioning with eye and tone.

'My darling!' returned Wilfrid.

She sat down to the organ with a smile. He was careful to retreat before the conclusion of the service; somewhat chagrined by his success. That smile of hers was inexplicable to him.

CHAPTER XXIV

EMILIA MAKES A MOVE

Mr. Pole was closeted in his City counting-house with Mr. Pericles, before a heap of papers and newly-opened foreign letters; to one of which, bearing a Russian stamp, he referred fretfully at times, as if to verify a monstrous fact. Any one could have seen that he was not in a condition to transact business. His face was unnaturally patched with colour, and his grey-tinged hair hung tumbled over his forehead like waves blown by a changeing wind. Still, he maintained his habitual effort to look collected, and defeat the scrutiny of the sallow-eyed fellow opposite; who quietly glanced, now and then, from the nervous feet to the nervous fingers, and nodded to himself a sardonic outlandish nod.

'Now, listen to me,' said Mr. Pericles. 'We shall not burst out about zis Riga man. He is a villain,—very well. Say it. He is a villain,—say so. And stop. Because' (and up went the Greek's forefinger), 'we must not have a scandàl, in ze fairst place. We do not want pity, in ze second. Saird, we must seem to trust him, in spite. I say, yeas! What is pity to us of commerce? It is contempt. We trust him on, and we

lose what he pocket—a sossand. We burst on him, and we lose twenty, serty, forty; and we lose reputation.'

'I'd have every villain hanged,' cried Mr. Pole. 'The scoundrel! I'd hang him with his own hemp. He talks of a factory burnt, and dares to joke about tallow! and in a business letter! and when he is telling one of a loss of money to that amount!'

'Not bad, ze joke,' grinned Mr. Pericles. 'It is a lesson of coolness. We learn it. But mind! he say, "possible loss." It is not positif. Hein! ze man is trying us. So! shall we burst out and make him despérate? We are in his hand at Riga, you see?'

'I see this,' said Mr. Pole, 'that he's a confounded rascal, and I'll know whether the law can't reach him.'

'Ha! ze law!' Mr. Pericles sneered. 'So you are, you English. Always, ze law! But, we are men—we are not machine. Law for a machine, not a man! We punish him, pérhaps. Well; he is punished. He is imprisoned—forty monz. We pay for him a sossand pound a monz. He is flogged—forty lashes. We pay for him a sossand pound a lash. You can afford zat? It is a luxury like anozer. It is not for me.'

'How long are we to trust the villain?' said Mr. Pole. 'If we trust him at all, mind! I don't say I do, or will.'

'Ze money is locked up for a year, my friend. So soon we get it, so soon he goes, from ze toe off.' Mr. Pericles' shining toe's-tip performed an agile circuit, and he smoothed his square clean jaw and venomous moustache reflectively. 'Not now, he resumed. 'While he hold us in his hand, we will not drive him to ze devil, or we go too, I believe, or part of ze way. But now, we say, zat money is frozen in ze Nord. We will make it in Australie, and in Greek waters. I have exposed to you my plan.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Pole, 'and I've told you I've no

pretensions to be a capitalist. We have no less than three ventures out, already.'

'It is like you English! When you have ze world to milk, you go to one point and stick. It fails, and you fail. What is zat word?'—Mr. Pericles tapped his brow—'pluck,—you want pluck. It is your decadence. Greek, and Russian, and Yankee, all zey beat you. For, it is pluck. You make a pin's head, not a pin. It is in brain and heart you do fail. You have only your position,—an island, and ships, and some favour. You are no match in pluck. We beat you. And we live for pleasure, while you groan and sweat—*mon Dieu!* it is slavery.'

Mr. Pericles twinkled his white eyes over the blinking merchant, and rose from his chair, humming a bit of opera, and announcing, casually, that a certain prima-donna had obtained a divorce from her husband.

'But,' he added suddenly, 'I say to you, if you cannot afford to speculate, run away from it as ze fire. Run away from it, and hold up your coat-tail. Jump ditches, and do not stop till you are safe home—hein? you say "cosy?" I hear my landlady. Run till you are safe cosy. But if you are a man wis a head and a pocket, zen you know that "speculate" means a dozen ventùres. So, you come clear. *Or*, it is ruin. It is ruin, I say: you have been playing.'

'An Englishman,' returned Mr. Pole, disgusted at the shrugs he had witnessed—'an Englishman 's as good as any of you. Look at us—look at our history—look at our wealth. By Jingo! But we like plain-dealing and common sense; and as to *afford*, what do you mean?'

'No, no,' Mr. Pericles petitioned with uplifted hand; 'my English is bad. It is—ah! bad. You shall look it over—my plan. It will strike your sense. Next week I go to Italy. I take ze little Belloni. You will

manage all. I have in you, my friend, pèrfec' confidence. An Englishman, he is honest. An Englishman and a Greek conjoined, zey beat ze world! It is true, *ma foi*. For zat, I seek you, and not a countryman. A Frenchman?—oh, no! A German?—not a bit! A Russian?—never! A Yankee?—save me! I am a Greek—I take an Englishman.'

'Well, well, you must leave me to think it over,' said Mr. Pole, pleasantly smoothed down. 'As to honesty, that 's a matter of course with us: that 's the mere footing we go upon. We don't plume ourselves upon what 's general, *here*. There *is*, I regret to say, a difference between us and other nations. I believe it 's partly their religion. They swindle us, and pay their priests for absolution with our money. If you 're a double-dyed sinner, you can easily get yourself whitewashed over there. Confound them! When that fellow sent no remittance last month, I told you I suspected him. Who was the shrewdest then? As for pluck, I never failed in that yet. But, I *will* see a thing clear. The man who speculates blindfold, is a fowl who walks into market to be plucked. Between being plucked, and having pluck, you 'll see a distinction when you know the language better; but you must make use of your head, or the chances are you won't *be* much of a difference,—eh? I 'll think over your scheme. I 'm not a man to hesitate, if the calculations are sound. I 'll look at the papers here.'

'My friend, you will decide before zat I go to Italy.' said Mr. Pericles, and presently took his leave.

When he was gone, Mr. Pole turned his chair to the table, and made an attempt to inspect one of the papers deliberately. Having untied it, he retied it with care, put it aside, marked 'immediate,' and read the letter from Riga anew. This he tore into shreds, with

animadversions on the quality of the rags that had produced it, and opened the important paper once more. He got to the end of a sentence or two, when his fingers moved about for the letter; and then his mind conceived a necessity for turning to the directory, for which he rang the bell. The great red book was brought into his room by a youthful clerk, who waited by, while his master, unaware of his presence, tracked a name with his forefinger. It stopped at POLE, SAMUEL BOLTON; and a lurking smile was on the merchant's face as he read the name: a smile of curious meaning, neither fresh nor sad; the meditative smile of one who looks upon an afflicted creature from whom he is aloof. After a lengthened contemplation of this name, he said, with a sigh, 'Poor Chump! I wonder whether he 's here, too.' A search for the defunct proved that he was out of date. Mr. Pole thrust his hand to the bell that he might behold poor Chump in an old directory that would call up the blotted years.

'I am here, sir,' said his clerk, who had been holding deferential watch at a few steps from the table.

'What do you do here then, sir, all this time?'

'I waited, sir, because——'

'You waste and dawdle away twenty or thirty minutes, when you ought to be doing your work. What do you mean?' Mr. Pole stood up and took an angry stride.

The young man could scarcely believe his master was not stooping to jest with him. He said: 'For that matter, sir, it can't be a minute that I have been wasting.'

'I called you in half an hour ago,' returned Mr. Pole, fumbling at his watch-fob.

'It must have been somebody else, sir.'

'Did you bring in this directory? Look at it! This?'

'This is the book that I brought in, sir.'

'How long since?'

I think, not a minute and a half, sir.'

Mr. Pole gazed at him, and coughed slowly. 'I could have sworn . . .' he murmured, and commenced blinking.

'I suppose I must be a little queer,' he pursued; and instantly his right hand struck out, quivering. The young clerk grasped it, and drew him to a chair.

'Tush,' said his master, working his feverish fingers across his forehead. 'Want of food. I don't eat like you young fellows. Fetch me a glass of wine and a biscuit. Good wine, mind. Port. Or, no; you can't trust tavern Port:—brandy. Get it yourself, don't rely on the porter. And bring it yourself, you understand the importance? What is your name?'

'Braintop,' replied the youth, with the modesty of one whose name has been too frequently subjected to puns.

'I think I never heard so singular a name in my life,' Mr. Pole ejaculated seriously. 'Braintop! It 'll always make me think of brandy. What are you waiting for now?'

'I took the liberty of waiting before, to say that a lady wished to see you, sir.'

Mr. Pole started from his chair. 'A foreign lady?'

'She may be foreign. She speaks English, sir, and her name, I think, was foreign. I 've forgotten it, I fear.'

'It 's the wife of that fellow from Riga!' cried the merchant. 'Show her in. Show her in, immediately. I suspected this. She 's in London, I know. I 'm equal to her: show her in. When you fetch the Braintop and biscuit, call me to the door. You understand.'

The youth affected meekly to enjoy this fiery significance given to his name, and said that he understood, without any doubt. He retired, and in a few moments ushered in Emilia Belloni.

Mr. Pole was in the middle of the room, wearing a countenance of marked severity, and watchful to maintain it in his opening bow; but when he perceived his little Brookfield guest standing timidly in the doorway, his eyebrows lifted, and his hands spread out; and 'Well, to be sure!' he cried; while Emilia hurried up to him. She had to assure him that everything was right at home, and was next called upon to state what had brought her to town; but his continued exclamation of 'Bless my soul!' reprieved her reply, and she sat in a chair panting quickly.

Mr. Pole spoke tenderly of refreshments; wine and cake, or biscuits.

'I cannot eat or drink,' said Emilia.

'Why, what 's come to you, my dear?' returned Mr. Pole in unaffected wonder.

'I am not hungry.'

'You generally are, at home, about this time—eh?'

Emilia sighed, and feigned the sad note to be a breath of fatigue.

'Well, and why are you here, my dear?' Mr. Pole was beginning to step to the right and the left of her uneasily.

'I have come——' she paused, with a curious quick speculating look between her eyes; 'I have come to see you.'

'See me, my dear? You saw me this morning.'

'Yes; I wanted to see you alone.'

Emilia was having the first conflict with her simplicity; out of which it was not to issue clear, as in the foregone days. She was thinking of the character of the man

she spoke to, studying him, that she might win him to succour the object she had in view. It was a quality going, and a quality coming; nor will we, if you please, lament a law of growth.

'Why, you can see me alone, any day, my dear,' said Mr. Pole; 'for many a day, I hope.'

'You are more alone to me here. I cannot speak at Brookfield. Oh!'—and Emilia had to still her heart's throbbing—'you do not want me to go to Italy, do you?'

'Want you to go? Not a bit. There is some talk of it, isn't there? I don't want you to go. Don't *you* want to go?'

'No! no!' said Emilia, with decisive fervour.

'Don't want to go?'

'No: to stay! I want to stay!'

'Eh? to stay?'

'To stay with you! Never to leave England, at least! I want to give up all that I may stay.'

'All?' repeated Mr. Pole, evidently marvelling as to what that sounding box might contain; and still more perplexed to hear Emilia's vehement—'Yes! all!' as if there were that in the mighty abnegation to make a reasonable listener doubtful.

'No. I really don't want you to go,' he said. 'In fact,' and the merchant's hospitable nature was at war with something in his mind, 'I like you, my dear; I like to have you about me. You 're cheerful; you 're agreeable; I like your smile; your voice, too. You 're a very pleasant companion. Only, you know, we may break up our house. If the girls get married, I must live somewhere in lodgings, and I couldn't very well ask you to cook for me.'

'I can cook a little,' Emilia smiled. 'I went into the kitchen, till Adela objected.'

'Yes, but it wouldn't do, you know,' pursued Mr. Pole,

with the seriousness of a man thrown out of his line of argument. 'You *can* cook, eh? Got an idea of it? I always said you were a useful little woman. Do have a biscuit and some wine:—No? well, where was I?—That confounded boy. Brainty—top, top! that 's it: Braintop. Was I talking of him, my dear? Oh no! about your getting married. For if you can cook, why not? Get a husband and then you won't got to Italy. You ought to get one. Some young fellows don't look for money.'

'I shall make money come, in time,' said Emilia; in the leaping ardour of whose eyes might be seen that what she had journeyed to speak was hot within her. 'I know I shall be worth having. I shall win a name, I think—I do hope it!'

'Well, so Pericles says. He 's got a great notion of you. Perhaps he means it himself. He 's rich. Rash, I admit. But, as the chances go, he 's tremendously rich. He may mean it.'

'What?' asked Emilia.

'Marry you, you know.'

'Ah, what a torture!'

In that heat of her feelings she realized the horror of the words to her, with an intensity that made them seem to quiver like an arrow in her breast.

'You don't like him?' said Mr. Pole.

'Not love him! not love him!'

'Yes, yes, but that comes after marriage. Often the case. Look here: don't you go against your interests. You mustn't be flighty. If Pericles speaks to you, have him. Clap your hands. Dozens of girls would, that I know.'

'But, oh!' interposed Emilia; 'if he married me he would kiss me!'

Mr. Pole coughed and blinked. 'Well!' he remarked,

as one gravely cogitating; and with the native delicacy of a Briton turned it off in a playful, 'So shall I now,' adding, 'though I ain't your husband.'

He stooped his head. Emilia put her hands on his shoulders, and submitted her face to him.

'There!' went Mr. Pole: ''pon my honour, it does me good:—better than medicine! But you mustn't give that dose to everybody, my dear. You don't, of course. All right, all right—I'm quite satisfied. I was only thinking of you going to Italy, among those foreign rascals, who 've no more respect for a girl than they have for a monkey—their brother. A set of swindlers! I took you for the wife of one when you came in, at first. And now, business is business. Let 's get it over. What have you come about? Glad to see you—understand that.'

Emilia lifted her eyes to his.

'You know I love you, sir.'

'I 'm sure you 're a grateful little woman.'

She rose: 'Oh! how can I speak it!'

An idea that his daughters had possibly sent her to herald one of the renowned physicians of London, concerning whom he was perpetually being plagued by them, or to lead him to one, flashed through Mr. Pole. He was not in a state to weigh the absolute value of such a suspicion, but it seemed probable; it explained an extraordinary proceeding; and, having conceived, his wrath took it up as a fact, and fought with it.

'Stop! If that 's what you 've come for, we 'll bring matters to a crisis. You fancy me ill, don't you, my dear?'

'You do not look well, sir.'

Emilia's unhesitating reply confirmed his suspicion.

'I *am* well. I am, I say! And now, understand that, if that 's your business, I won't go to the fellow, and I

won't see him here. They 'll make me out mad, next. He shall never have a guinea from me while I live. No, nor when I die. Not a farthing! Sit down, my dear, and wait for the biscuits. I wish to heaven they 'd come. There 's brandy coming, too. Where's Braintop?'

He took out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead, and jerked it like a bell-rope.

Emilia, in a singular bewilderment, sat eyeing a beam of sombre city sunlight on the dusty carpet. She could only suppose that the offending 'he' was Wilfrid; but, why he should be so, she could not guess: and how to plead for him, divided her mind.

'Don't blame him; be angry with me, if you are angry,' she began softly. 'I know he thinks of you anxiously. I know he would do nothing to hurt you. No one is so kind as he is. Would you deprive him of money, because he offends you?'

'Deprive him of money,' repeated Mr. Pole, with ungrudging accentuation. 'Well, I 've heard about women, but I never knew one so anxious for a doctor to get his fee as you are.'

Emilia wonderingly fixed her sight on him an instant, and, quite unillumined, resumed: 'Blame me, sir. But, I know you will be too kind. Oh! I love him. So, I must love you, and I would not give you pain. It *is* true he loves me. You will not see him, because he loves me?'

'The doctor?' muttered Mr. Pole. 'The doctor?' he almost bellowed; and got sharp up from his chair, and looked at himself in the glass, blinking rapidly; and then turned to inspect Emilia.

Emilia drew him to her side again.

'Go on,' he said; and there became visible in his face a frightful effort to comprehend her, and get to the sense of her words.

And why it was so frightful as to be tragic, you will know presently.

He thought of the arrival of Braintop, freighted with brandy, as the only light in the mist, and breathing heavily from his nose, almost snorting the air he took in from a widened mouth, he sat and tried to listen to her words as well as for Braintop's feet.

Emilia was growing too conscious of her halting eloquence, as the imminence of her happiness or misery hung balancing in doubtful scales before her.

'Oh! he loves me, and I love him,' she gasped, and wondered why words should be failing her. 'See us together, sir, and hear us. We will make you well.'

The exclamation 'Good Lord!' groaned out in a tone as from the lower pits of despair, cut her short.

Tearfully she murmured: 'You will not see us, sir?'

'Together?' bawled the merchant.

'Yes, I mean together.'

'If you 're not mad, I am.' And he jumped on his legs and walked to the farther corner of the room. 'Which of us is it?' His features twitched in horribly comic fashion. 'What do you mean? I can't understand a word. My brain must have gone'; throwing his hand over his forehead. 'I 've feared so for the last four months. Good God! a lunatic asylum! and the business torn like a piece of old rag! I know that fellow at Riga 's dancing like a cannibal, and there—there 'll be articles in the papers.—Here, girl! come up to the light. Come here, I say.'

Emilia walked up to him.

'You don't look mad. I dare say everybody else understands you. Do they?'

The sad-flushed pallor of his face provoked Emilia to

say: 'You ought to have the doctor here immediately. Let me bring him, sir.'

A gleam as of a lantern through his oppressive mental fog calmed the awful irritability of his nerves somewhat.

'You 've got him outside?'

'No, sir.'

The merchant's eagerness faded out. He put his hand to her shoulder, and went along to a chair, sinking into it, and closing his eyelids. So they remained, Emilia at his right hand. She watched him breathing with a weak open mouth, and thought more of the doctor now than of Wilfrid.

CHAPTER XXV

A FARCE WITHIN A FARCE

Braintop's knock at the door had been unheeded for some minutes. At last Emilia let him in. The brandy and biscuits were placed on a table, and Emilia resumed her watch by Mr. Pole. She saw that his lips moved, after a space, and putting her ear down, understood that he desired not to see any one who might come for an interview with him: nor were the clerks to be admitted. The latter direction was given in precise terms. Emilia repeated the orders outside. On her return, the merchant's eyes were open.

'My forehead feels damp,' he said; 'and I 'm not hot at all. Just take hold of my hands. They 're like wet crumpets. I wonder what makes me so stiff. A man mustn't sit at business too long at a time. Sure to make people think he 's ill. What was that about a doctor? I seem to remember. I won't see one.'

Emilia had filled a glass with brandy. She brought it nearer to his hand, while he was speaking. At the touch of the glass, his fingers went round it slowly, and he raised it to his mouth. The liquor revived him. He breathed 'ah!' several times, and grimaced, blinking, as if seeking to arouse a proper brightness in his eyes. Then, he held out his empty glass to her, and she filled it, and he sipped deliberately, saying: 'I 'm warm inside. I keep on perspiring so cold. Can't make it out. Look at my finger-ends, my dear. They 're whitish, aren't they?'

Emilia took the hand he presented, and chafed it, and put it against her bosom, half under one arm. The action appeared to give some warmth to his heart, for he petted her, in return.

A third time he held out the glass, and remarked that this stuff was better than medicine.

'You women!' he sneered, as at a reminiscence of their faith in drugs.

'My legs *are* weak, though!' He had risen and tested the fact. 'Very shaky. I wonder what makes 'em—I don't take much exercise.' Pondering on this problem, he pursued: It 's the stomach. I 'm as empty as an egg-shell. Odd, I 've got no appetite. But, my spirits are up. I begin to feel myself again. I 'll eat by-and-by, my dear. And, I say; I 'll tell you what:—I 'll take you to the theatre to-night. I want to laugh. A man 's all right when he 's laughing. I wish it was Christmas. Don't you like to see the old pantaloon tumbled over, my boy?—my girl, I mean. I did, when I was a boy. My father took me. I went in the pit. I can smell oranges, when I think of it. I remember, we supped on German sausage; or ham—one or the other. Those were happy old days!'

He shook his head at them across the misty gulf.

'Perhaps there 's a good farce going on now. If so, we 'll go. Girls ought to learn to laugh as well as boys. I 'll ring for Braintop.'

He rang the bell, and bade Emilia be careful to remind him that he wanted Braintop's address; for Braintop was useful.

It appeared that there were farces at several of the theatres. Braintop rattled them out, their plot and fun and the merits of the actors, with delightful volubility, as one whose happy subject had been finally discovered. He was forthwith commissioned to start immediately and take a stage-box at one of the places of entertainment, where two great rivals of the Doctor genus promised to laugh dull care out of the spirit of man triumphantly, and at the description of whose drolleries any one with faith might be half cured. The youth gave his address on paper to Emilia.

'Make haste, sir,' said Mr. Pole. 'And, stop. You shall go, yourself; go to the pit, and have a supper, and I 'll pay for it. When you 've ordered the box—do you know the Bedford Hotel? Go there, and see Mrs. Chickley, and tell her I am coming to dine and sleep, and shall bring one of my daughters. Dinner, sitting-room, and two bed-rooms, mind. And tell Mrs. Chickley we 've got no carpet-bag, and must come upon her wardrobe. All clear to you? Dinner at half-past five:—going to theatre.'

Braintop bowed comprehendingly.

'Now, that fellow goes off chirping,' said Mr. Pole to Emilia. 'It 's just the thing I used to wish to happen to me, when I was his age—my master to call me in and say—"There! go and be jolly." I dare say the rascal 'll order a champagne supper. Poor young chap! let his heart be merry. Ha! ha! heigho!—Too much business is bad for man and boy. I feel better already, if it

weren't for my legs. My feet are so cold. Don't you think I 'm pretty talkative, my dear?'

'I am glad to hear you talk,' said Emilia, striving to look less perplexed than she felt.

He asked her slyly why she had come to London; and she begged that she might speak of it by-and-by; whereat Mr. Pole declared that he intended to laugh them all out of that nonsense. 'And what did you say about being in love with him? A doctor in good practice—but you needn't commence by killing me if you do go and marry the fellow. Eh? what is it?'

Emilia was too much entangled herself to attempt to extricate him; and apparently his wish to be enlightened passed away, for he was the next instant searching among his papers for the letter from Riga. Not finding it, he put on his hat.

'Must give up business to-day. Can't do business with a petticoat in the room. I wish the Lord Mayor 'd stop them all at Temple Bar. Now we 'll go out, and I 'll show you a bit of the City.'

He offered her his arm, and she noticed that in walking through the office, he was erect, and the few words he spoke were delivered in the peremptory elastic tone of a vigorous man.

'My girls,' he said to her in an undertone, 'never come here. Well! we don't expect ladies, you know. Different spheres in this world. They mean to be tip-top in society; and quite right too. My dear, I think we 'll ride. Do you mind being seen in a cab?'

He asked her hesitatingly: and when Emilia said, 'Oh, no! let us ride,' he seemed relieved. '*I* can't see the harm in a cab. Different tastes, in this world. My girls—but, thank the Lord! they 've got carriages.'

For an hour the merchant and Emilia drove about the City. He showed her all the great buildings, and dilated

on the fabulous piles of wealth they represented, taking evident pleasure in her exclamations of astonishment.

'Yes, yes; they may despise us City fellows. I say, "come and see": that 's all! Now, look up that court. Do you see three dusty windows on the second floor? That man there could buy up any ten princes in Europe —excepting one or two Austrians or Russians. He wears a coat just like mine.'

'Does he?' said Emilia, involuntarily examining the one by her side.

'We don't show our gold-linings, in the City, my dear.'

'But, you are rich, too.'

'Oh! I—as far as that goes. Don't talk about me. I 'm—I 'm still cold in the feet. Now, look at that corner house. Three months ago that man was one of our most respected City merchants. Now he 's a bankrupt, and can't show his head. It was all rotten. A medlar! He tampered with documents; betrayed trusts. What do you think of him?'

'What was it he did?' asked Emilia.

Mr. Pole explained, and excused him; then he explained, and abused him.

'He hadn't a family, my dear. Where did the money go? He 's called a rascal now, poor devil! Business brings awful temptations. You think, *this* 'll save me! You catch hold of it and it snaps. *That* 'll save me; but you 're too heavy, and the roots give way, and down you go lower and lower. Lower *and* lower! The gates of hell must be very low down if one of our bankrupts don't reach 'em.' He spoke this in a deep underbreath. 'Let 's get out of the City. There 's no air. Look at that cloud. It 's about over Brookfield, I should say.'

'Dear Brookfield!' echoed Emilia, feeling her heart fly forth to sing like a skylark under the cloud.

'And they 're not satisfied with it,' murmured Mr. Pole, with a voice of unwonted bitterness.

At the hotel, he was received very cordially by Mrs. Chickley, and Simon, the old waiter.

'You look as young as ever, ma'am,' Mr. Pole complimented her cheerfully, while he stamped his feet on the floor, and put forward Emilia as one of his girls; but immediately took the landlady aside, to tell her that she was 'merely a charge—a ward—something of that sort'; admitting, gladly enough, that she was a very nice young lady. 'She 's a genius, ma'am, in music:—going to do wonders. She 's not one of *them*.' And Mr. Pole informed Mrs. Chickley that when *they* came to town, they usually slept in one or other of the great squares. He, for his part, preferred old quarters: comfort versus grandeur.

Simon had soon dressed the dinner-table. By the time dinner was ready, Mr. Pole had sunk into such a condition of drowsiness, that it was hard to make him see why he should be aroused, and when he sat down, fronting Emilia, his eyes were glazed, and he complained that she was scarcely visible.

'Some of your old yellow seal, Simon. That 's what I want. I haven't got better at home.'

The contents of this old yellow seal formed the chief part of the merchant's meal. Emilia was induced to drink two full glasses.

'Doesn't that make your feet warm, my dear?' said Mr. Pole.

'It makes me want to talk,' Emilia confessed.

'Ah! we shall have some fun to-night. "To-the-rutte-ta-ta!" If you could only sing, "Begone dull care!" I like glees: good, honest, English, manly singing for me! Nothing like glees and madrigals, to my mind. With chops and baked potatoes, and a glass of good stout, they beat all other music.'

Emilia sang softly to him.

When she had finished, Mr. Pole applauded her mildly.

'Your music, my dear?'

'My music: Mr. Runningbrook's words. But only look. He will not change a word, and some of the words are so curious, they make me lift my chin and pout. It 's all in my throat. I feel as if I had to do it on tiptoe. Mr. Runningbrook wrote the song in ten minutes.'

'He can afford to—comes of a family,' said Mr. Pole, and struck up a bit of 'Celia's Arbour,' which wandered into 'The Soldier Tired,' as he came bendingly, both sets of fingers filliping, toward Emilia, with one of those ancient glee-suspensions, 'Taia-haia-haia-haia,' etc., which were meant for jolly fellows who could bear anything.

'Eh?' went Mr. Pole, to elicit approbation in return.

Emilia smoothed the wrinkles of her face, and smiled.

'There 's nothing like Port,' said Mr. Pole. 'Get little Runningbrook to write a song: "There 's nothing like Port." You put the music. I 'll sing it.'

'You will?' cried Emilia.

'Yes, upon my honour! now my feet are warmer, I—— by Jingo! what 's that?' and again he wore that strange calculating look, as if he were being internally sounded, and guessed at his probable depth. 'What a twitch! Something wrong with my stomach. But a fellow must be all right when his spirits are up. We 'll be off as quick as we can. Taia—haihaia—hum. If the farce is bad, it 's my last night of theatre-going.'

The delight at being in a theatre kept Emilia dumb when she gazed on the glittering lights. After an inspection of the house, Mr. Pole kindly remarked: 'You must marry and get out of this. This 'd never do. All very well in the boxes: but on the stage—oh, no! I shouldn't like you to be there. If my girls don't approve

of the doctor, they shall look out somebody for you. I shouldn't like you to be painted, and rigged out; and have to squall in this sort of place. Stage won't do for you. No, no!'

Emilia replied that she had given up the stage; and looked mournfully at the drop-scene, as at a lost kingdom, scarcely repressing her tears.

The orchestra tuned and played a light overture. She followed up the windings of the drop-scene valley, meeting her lover somewhere beneath the castle-ruin, where the river narrowed and the trees intertwined. On from dream to dream the music carried her, and dull fell the first words of the farce. Mr. Pole said, 'Now, then!' and began to chuckle. As the farce proceeded, he grew more serious, repeating to Emilia, quite anxiously: 'I wonder whether that boy Braintop 's enjoying it.' Emilia glanced among the sea of heads, and finally eliminated the head of Braintop, who was respectfully devoting his gaze to the box she occupied. When Mr. Pole had been assisted to discover him likewise, his attention alternated between Braintop and the stage, and he expressed annoyance from time to time at the extreme composure of Braintop's countenance. 'Why don't the fellow laugh? Does he think he 's listening to a sermon?' Poor Braintop, on his part, sat in mortal fear lest his admiration of Emilia was perceived. Divided between this alarming suspicion, and a doubt that the hair on his forehead was not properly regulated, he became uneasy and fitful in his deportment. His imagination plagued him with a sense of guilt, which his master's watchfulness of him increased. He took an opportunity furtively to eye himself in a pocket-mirror, and was subsequently haunted by an additional dread that Emilia might have discovered the instrument, and set him down as a vain foolish dog. When he saw her laugh he

was sure of it. Instead of responding to Mr. Pole's encouragement, he assumed a taciturn aspect worthy of a youthful anchorite, and continued to be the spectator of a scene to which his soul was dead.

'I believe that fellow 's thinking of nothing but his supper,' said Mr. Pole.

'I dare say he dined early in the day,' returned Emilia, remembering how hungry she used to be in the evenings of the potatoe-days.

'Yes, but he might laugh, all the same.' And Mr. Pole gave Emilia the sound advice: 'Mind you never marry a fellow who can't laugh.'

Braintop saw Emilia smile. Then, in an instant, her face changed its expression to one of wonder and alarm, and her hands clasped together tightly. What on earth was the matter with her? His agitated fancy, centred in himself, now decided that some manifestation of most shocking absurdity had settled on his forehead, or his hair, for he was certain of his neck-tie. Braintop had recourse to his pocket-mirror once more. It afforded him a rapid interchange of glances with a face which he at all events could distinguish from the mass, though we need not.

The youth was in the act of conveying the instrument to its retreat, when conscience sent his eyes toward Emilia, who, to his horror, beckoned to him, and touched Mr. Pole, entreating him to do the same. Mr. Pole gesticulated imperiously, whereat Braintop rose, and requested his neighbour to keep his seat for ten minutes, as he was going into that particular box; and 'If I don't come back in ten minutes, I shall stop there,' said Braintop, a little grandly, through the confusion of his ideas, as he guessed at the possible reasons for the summons.

Emilia had seen her father in the orchestra. There he sat, under the leader, sullenly fiddling the prelude to the

second play, like a man ashamed, and one of the beaten in this world. Flight had been her first thought. She had cause to dread him. The more she lived and the dawning knowledge of what it is to be a woman in the world grew with her, the more she shrank from his guidance, and from reliance on him. Not that she conceived him designedly base; but he outraged her now conscious delicacy, and what she had to endure as a girl seemed unbearable to her now. Besides, she felt a secret shuddering at nameless things, which made her sick of the thought of returning to him and his Jew friends. But, alas! he looked so miserable—a child of harmony among the sons of discord! He kept his head down, fiddling like a machine. The old potatoe-days became pathetically edged with dead light to Emilia. She could not be cruel. 'When I am *safe*,' she laid stress on the word in her mind, to awaken blessed images, 'I will see him often, and make him happy; but I will let him know that all is well with me now, and that I love him always.'

So she said to Mr. Pole, 'I know one of those in the orchestra. May I write a word to him on a piece of paper before we go? I wish to.'

Mr. Pole reflected, and seeing her earnest in her desire to do this, replied: 'Well, yes; if you must—the girls are not here.'

Emilia borrowed his pencil-case, and wrote:—

'Sandra is well, and always loves her caro papa, and is improving, and will see him soon. Her heart is full of love for him and for her mama; and if they leave their lodgings they are to leave word where they go. Sandra never forgets Italy, and reads the papers. She has a copy of the score of an unknown opera by our Andronizetti, and studies it, and anatomy, English, French, and pure Italian, and can ride a horse. She has made rich friends, who love her. It will not be long, and you will see her.'

The hasty scrawl concluded with numerous little caressing exclamations in Italian diminutives. This done, Emilia thought: 'But he will look up and see me!' She resolved not to send it till they were about to quit the theatre. Consequently, Braintop, on his arrival, was told to sit down. 'You don't look cheerful in the pit,' said Mr. Pole. 'You 're above it?—eh? You 're all alike in that. None of you do what your dads did. Up-up-up? You may get too high, eh?—Gallery?' and Mr. Pole winked knowingly and laughed.

Braintop, thus elevated, tried his best to talk to Emilia, who sat half fascinated with the fear of seeing her father lift his eyes and recognize her suddenly. She sat boldly in the front, as before; not being a young woman to hide her head where there was danger, and having perhaps a certain amount of the fatalism which is often youth's philosophy in the affairs of life. 'If this is to be, can I avert it?'

Mr. Pole began to nod at the actors, heavily. He said to Emilia, 'If there is any fun going on, give me a nudge.' Emilia kept her eyes on her father in the orchestra, full of pity for his deplorable wig, in which she read his later domestic history, and sad tales of the family dinners.

'Do you see one of those'—she pointed him out to Braintop;—'he is next to the leader, with his back to us. Are you sure? I want you to give him this note before he goes; when we go. Will you do it? I shall always be thankful to you.'

Considering what Braintop was ready to do that he might be remembered for a day and no more, the request was so very moderate as to be painful to him.

'You will leave him when you have given it into his hand. You are not to answer any questions,' said Emilia.

With a reassuring glance at the musician's wig, Braintop bent his head.

'Do see,' she pursued, 'how differently he bows from the other men, though it is only dance music. Oh, how his ears are torn by that violoncello! He wants to shriek:—he bears it!'

She threw a piteous glance across the agitated instruments, and Braintop was led to inquire: 'Is he anything particular?'

'He can bring out notes that are more like honey—if you can fancy a thread of honey drawn through your heart as if it would never end! He is Italian.'

Braintop modestly surveyed her hair and brows and cheeks, and taking the print of her eyes on his brain to dream over, smelt at a relationship with the wry black wig, which cast a halo about it.

The musicians laid down their instruments, and trooped out, one by one. Emilia perceived a man brush against her father's elbow. Her father flicked at his offended elbow with the opposite hand, and sat crumpled up till all had passed him: then went out alone. That little action of disgust showed her that he had not lost spirit, albeit condemned to serve amongst an inferior race, promoters of discord.

Just as the third play was opening, some commotion was seen in the pit, rising from near Braintop's vacated seat; and presently a thing that shone flashing to the lights, came on from hand to hand, each hand signalling subsequently toward Mr. Pole's box. It approached. Braintop's eyes were in waiting on Emilia, who looked sadly at the empty orchestra. A gentleman in the stalls, a head beneath her, bowed, and holding up a singular article, gravely said that he had been requested to pass it. She touched Mr. Pole's shoulder. 'Eh? anything funny?' said he, and glanced around. He was in time

to see Braintop lean hurriedly over the box, and snatch his pocket-mirror from the gentleman's hand. 'Ha! ha!' he laughed, as if a comic gleam had illumined him. A portion of the pit and stalls laughed too. Emilia smiled merrily. 'What was it?' said she; and perceiving many faces beneath her red among handkerchiefs, she was eager to see the thing that the unhappy Braintop had speedily secreted.

'Come, sir, let 's see it!' quoth Mr. Pole, itching for a fresh laugh; and in spite of Braintop's protest, and in defiance of his burning blush, he compelled the wretched youth to draw it forth, and be manifestly convicted of vanity.

A shout of laughter burst from Mr. Pole. 'No wonder these young sparks cut us all out. Lord, what cunning dogs they are! They ain't satisfied with seeing themselves in their boots, but they—ha! ha! By George! We 've got the best fun in our box. I say, Braintop! you ought to have two, my boy. Then you 'd see how you looked behind. Ha—ha—hah! Never enjoyed an evening so much in my life! A looking-glass for their pockets! ha! ha!—hooh!'

Luckily the farce demanded laughter, or those parts of the pit which had not known Braintop would have been indignant. Mr. Pole became more and more possessed by the fun, as the contrast of Braintop's abject humiliation with this glaring testimony to his conceit tickled him. He laughed till he complained of hunger. Emilia, though she thought it natural that Braintop should carry a pocket-mirror if he pleased, laughed from sympathy; until Braintop, reduced to the verge of forbearance, stood up and remarked that, to perform the mission entrusted to him, he must depart immediately. Mr. Pole was loth to let him go, but finally commending him to a good supper, he sighed, and declared himself a new man.

'Oh! what a jolly laugh! The very thing I wanted! It 's worth hundreds to me. I *was* queer before: no doubt about that.'

Again the ebbing convulsion of laughter seized him. 'I feel as clear as day,' he said; and immediately asked Emilia whether she thought he would have strength to get down to the cab. She took his hand, trying to assist him from the seat. He rose, and staggered an instant. 'A sort of reddish cloud,' he murmured, feeling over his forehead. 'Ha! I know what it is. I want a chop. A chop and a song. But, I couldn't take you, and I like you by me. Good little woman!' He patted Emilia's shoulder, preparatory to leaning on it with considerable weight, and so descended to the cab, chuckling ever and anon at the reminiscence of Braintop.

There was a disturbance in the street. A man with a foreign accent was shouting by the door of a neighbouring public-house, that he would not yield his hold of the collar of a struggling gentleman, till the villain had surrendered his child, whom he scandalously concealed from her parents. A scuffle ensued, and the foreign voice was heard again:—

'Wat! wat! you have de shame, you have de pluck, ah! to tell me you know not where she is, and you bring me a letter? Ho!—you have de cheeks to tell me!'

This highly effective pluralizing of their peculiar slang, brought a roar of applause from the crowd of Britons.

'Only a street row,' said Mr. Pole, to calm Emilia.

'Will he be hurt?' she cried.

'I see a couple of policemen handy,' said Mr. Pole, and Emilia cowered down and clung to his hand as they drove from the place.

CHAPTER XXVI

SUGGESTS THAT THE COMIC MASK HAS SOME KINSHIP WITH A SKULL

It was midnight. Mr. Pole had appeased his imagination with a chop, and was trying to revive the memory of his old after-theatre night carouses by listening to a song which Emilia sang to him, while he sipped at a smoking mixture, and beat time on the table, rejoiced that he was warm from head to foot at last.

'That 's a pretty song, my dear,' he said. 'A very pretty song. It does for an old fellow; and so did my supper: light and wholesome. I 'm an old fellow; I ought to know I 've got a grown-up son and grown-up daughters. I shall be a grandpa, soon, I dare say. It 's not the thing for me to go about hearing glees. I had an idea of it. I 'm better here. All I want is to see my children happy, married and settled, and comfortable!'

Emilia stole up to him, and dropped on one knee: 'You love them?'

'I do. I love my girls and my boy. *And* my brandy-and-water, do you mean to say, you rogue?'

'And me?' Emilia looked up at him beseechingly.

'Yes, and you. I do. I haven't known you long, my dear, but I shall be glad to do what I can for you. You shall make my house your home as long as you live; and if I say, make haste and get married, it 's only just this: girls ought to marry young, and not be in an uncertain position.'

'Am I worth having?'

'To be sure you are! I should think so. You haven 't

got a penny; but, then, you 're not for spending one. And'—Mr. Pole nodded to right and left like a man who silenced a host of invisible logicians, urging this and that —'you 're a pleasant companion, thrifty, pretty, musical: by Jingo! what more do they want? They 'll have their song and chop at home.'

'Yes; but suppose it depends upon their fathers?'

'Well, if their fathers will be fools, my dear, I can't help 'em. We needn't take 'em in a lump: how about the doctor? I 'll see him to-morrow morning, and hear what he has to say. Shall I?'

Mr. Pole winked shrewdly.

'You will not make my heart break?' Emilia's voice sounded one low chord as she neared the thing she had to say.

'Bless her soul!' the old merchant patted her; 'I 'm not the sort of man for that.'

'Nor his?'

'His?' Mr. Pole's nerves became uneasy in a minute, at the scent of a mystification. He dashed his handkerchief over his forehead, repeating: 'His? Break a man's heart! I? What 's the meaning of that? For God's sake, don't bother me!'

Emilia was still kneeling before him, eyeing him with a shadowed stedfast air.

'I say his, because his heart is in mine. He has any pain that hurts me.'

'He may be tremendously in love,' observed Mr. Pole; 'but he seems a deuced soft sort of a doctor! What 's his name?'

'I love Wilfrid.'

The merchant appeared to be giving ear to her, long after the words had been uttered, while there was silence in the room.

'Wilfrid? my son?' he cried with a start.

'He is my lover.'

'Damned rascal!' Mr. Pole jumped from his chair. 'Going and playing with an unprotected girl. I can pardon a young man's folly, but this is infamous. My dear child,' he turned to Emilia, 'if you 've got any notion about my son Wilfrid, you must root it up as quick as you can. If he 's been behaving like a villain, leave him to me. I detest, I hate, I loathe, I would kick, a young man who deceives a girl. Even if he 's my son!—more 's the reason!'

Mr. Pole was walking up and down the room, fuming as he spoke. Emilia tried to hold his hand, as he was passing, but he said: 'There, my child! I 'm very sorry for you, and I 'm damned angry with him. Let me go.'

'Can you, can you be angry with him for loving me?'

'Deceiving you,' returned Mr. Pole; 'that 's what it is. And I tell you, I 'd rather fifty times the fellow had deceived me. Anything rather than that he should take advantage of a girl.'

'Wilfrid loves me and would die for me,' said Emilia.

'Now, let me tell you the fact,' Mr. Pole came to a halt, fronting her. 'My son Wilfrid Pole may be in love, as he says, here and there, but he is engaged to be married to a lady of title. I have his word—his oath. He got near a thousand pounds out of my pocket the other day on that understanding. I don't speak about the money, but—now—it 's a lump—others would have made a nice row about it—but *is* he a liar? Is he a seducing, idling, vagabond dog? Is he a contemptible scoundrel?'

'He is my lover,' said Emilia.

She stood without changeing a feature; as in a darkness, holding to the one thing she was sure of. Then, with a sudden track of light in her brain: 'I know the mistake,' she said. 'Pardon him. He feared to offend you,

because you are his father, and he thought I might not quite please you. For, he *loves* me. He has loved me from the first moment he saw me. He cannot be engaged to another. I could bring him from any woman's side. I have only to say to myself—he must come to me. For he loves me! It is not a thing to doubt.'

Mr. Pole turned and recommenced his pacing with hasty steps. All the indications of a nervous tempest were on him. Interjecting half-formed phrases, and now and then staring at Emilia, as at an incomprehensible object, he worked at his hair till it lent him the look of one in horror at an apparition.

'The fellow 's going to marry Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, I tell you. He has asked my permission. The infernal scamp! he knew it pleased me. He bled me of a thousand pounds only the other day. I tell you, he 's going to marry Lady Charlotte Chillingworth.'

Emilia received this statement with a most perplexing smile. She shook her head. 'He cannot.'

'Cannot? I say he shall, and must, and in a couple of months, too!'

The gravely sceptical smile on Emilia's face changed to a blank pallor.

'Then, you make him, sir—you?'

'He 'll be a beggar, if he don't.'

'You will keep him without money?'

Mr. Pole felt that he gazed on strange deeps in that girl's face. Her voice had the wire-like hum of a rising wind. There was no menace in her eyes: the lashes of them drooped almost tenderly, and the lips were but softly closed. The heaving of the bosom, though weighty, was regular: the hands hung straight down, and were open. She looked harmless; but his physical apprehensiveness was sharpened by his nervous condition, and he read power in her: the capacity to concentrate all

animal and mental vigour into one feeling—this being the power of the soul.

So she stood, breathing quietly, steadily eyeing him.

'No, no'; went on Mr. Pole. 'Come, come. We 'll sit down, and see, and talk—see what can be done. You know I always meant kindly by you.'

'Oh, yes!' Emilia musically murmured, and it cost her nothing to smile again.

'Now, tell me how this began.' Mr. Pole settled himself comfortably to listen, all irritation having apparently left him, under the influence of the dominant nature. 'You need not be ashamed to talk it over to me.'

'I am not ashamed,' Emilia led off, and told her tale simply, with here and there one of her peculiar illustrations. She had not thought of love till it came to life suddenly, she said; and then all the world looked different. The relation of Wilfrid's bravery in fighting for her, varied for a single instant the low monotony of her voice. At the close of the confession, Mr. Pole wore an aspect of distress. This creature's utter unlikeness to the girls he was accustomed to, corroborated his personal view of the case, that Wilfrid certainly could not have been serious, and that she was deluded. But he pitied her, for he had sufficient imagination to prevent him from despising what he did not altogether comprehend. So, to fortify the damsel, he gave her a lecture: first, on young men—their selfish inconsiderateness, their weakness, the wanton lives they led, their trick of lying for any sugar-plum, and how they laughed at their dupes. Secondly, as to the conduct consequently to be prescribed to girls, who were weaker, frailer, by disposition more confiding, and who must believe nothing but what they heard their elders say.

Emilia gave patient heed to the lecture.

'But I am safe,' she remarked,' when he had finished; 'for my lover is not as those young men are.'

To speak at all, and arrange his ideas, was a vexation to the poor merchant. He was here like an irritable traveller, who knocks at a gate, which makes as if it opens, without letting him in. Emilia's naïve confidence he read as stupidity. It brought on a fresh access of the nervous fever lurking in him, and he cried, jumping from his seat: 'Well, you can't have him, and there 's an end. You must give up—confound! why! do you expect to have everything you want at starting? There, my child —but, upon my honour! a man loses his temper at having to talk for an hour or so, and no result. You must go to bed; and—do you say your prayers? Well! that 's one way of getting out of it—pray that you may forget all about what 's not good for you. Why, you 're almost like a young man, when you set your mind on a thing. Bad! won't do! Say your prayers regularly. And, please, pour me out a mouthful of brandy. My hand trembles—I don't know what 's the matter with it;— just like those rushes on the Thames I used to see when out fishing. No wind, and yet there they shake away. I wish it was daylight on the old river now! It 's night, and no mistake. I feel as if I had a fellow twirling a stick over my head. The rascal 's been at it for the last month. There, stop where you are, my dear. Don't begin to dance!'

He pressed at his misty eyes, half under the impression that she was taking a succession of dazzling leaps in air. Terror of an impending blow, which he associated with Emilia's voice, made him entreat her to be silent. After a space, he breathed a long breath of relief, saying: 'No, no; you 're firm enough on your feet. I don't think I ever saw you dance. My girls have given it up

What led me to think . . . but, let 's to bed, and say our prayers. I want a kiss.'

Emilia kissed him on the forehead. The symptoms of illness were strange to her, and passed unheeded. She was too full of her own burning passion to take evidence from her sight. The sun of her world was threatened with extinction. She felt herself already a wanderer in a land of tombs, where none could say whether morning had come or gone. Intensely she looked her misery in the face; and it was as a voice that said, 'No sun: never sun any more,' to her. But a blue-hued moon slipped from among the clouds, and hung in the black outstretched fingers of the tree of darkness, fronting troubled waters. 'This is thy light for ever! thou shalt live in thy dream.' So, as in a prison-house, did her soul now recall the blissful hours by Wilming Weir. She sickened but an instant. The blood in her veins was too strong a tide for her to crouch in that imagined corpse-like universe which alternates with an irradiated Eden in the brain of the passionate young.

'Why should I lose him!' The dry sob choked her.

She struggled with the emotion in her throat, and Mr. Pole, who had previously dreaded supplication and appeals for pity, caressed her. Instantly the flood poured out.

'You are not cruel. I knew it. I should have died, if you had come between us. Oh, Wilfrid's father, I love you!—I have never had a very angry word on my mouth. Think! think! if you had made me curse *you*. For, I could! You would have stopped my life, and Wilfrid's. What would our last thoughts have been? We could not have forgiven you. Take up dead birds killed by frost. You cry: Cruel winter! murdering cold! But I knew better. You are Wilfrid's father, whom I can kneel to. My lover's father! my own father! my friend next to

heaven! Oh! bless my love for him. You have only to know what my love for him is! The thought of losing him goes like perishing cold through my bones;—my heart jerks, as if it had to pull up my body from the grave every time it beats. . . .'

'God in heaven!' cried the horrified merchant, on whose susceptible nerves these images wrought with such a force that he absolutely had dread of her. He gasped, and felt at his heart, and then at his pulse; rubbed the moisture from his forehead, and throwing a fixedly wild look on her eyes, he jumped up and left her kneeling.

His caress had implied mercy to Emilia: for she could not reconcile it with the rejection of the petition of her soul. She was now a little bewildered to see him trotting the room, frowning and blinking, and feeling at one wrist, at momentary pauses, all his words being: 'Let 's be quiet. Let 's be good. Let 's go to bed, and say our prayers'; mingled with short ejaculations.

'I may say,' she intercepted him, 'I may tell my dear lover that you bless us both, and that we are to live. Oh, speak! sir! let me hear you!'

'Let 's go to bed,' iterated Mr. Pole. 'Come, candles! do light them. In God's name! light candles. And let 's be off and say our prayers.'

'You consent, sir?'

'What 's that your heart does?' Mr. Pole stopped to enquire; adding: 'There, don't tell me. You 've played the devil with mine. Who 'd ever have made me believe that I should feel more at ease running up and down the room, than seated in my arm-chair! Among the wonders of the world, that!'

Emilia put up her lips to kiss him, as he passed her. There was something deliciously soothing and haven-like to him in the aspect of her calmness.

'Now, you 'll be a good girl,' said he, when he had taken her salute.

'And you,' she rejoined, 'will be happier!'

His voice dropped. 'If you go on like this, you 've done for me!'

But she could make no guess at any tragic meaning in his words. 'My father—let me call you so!'

'*Will* you see that you can't have him?' he stamped the syllables into her ears: and, with a notion of there being a foreign element about her, repeated:—'No!—not have him!—not yours!—somebody else's!'

This was clear enough.

'Only you can separate us,' said Emilia, with a brow levelled intently.

'Well, and I'—Mr. Pole was pursuing in the gusty energy of his previous explanation. His eyes met Emilia's, gravely widening. 'I—I 'm very sorry,' he broke down: 'upon my soul, I am!'

The old man went to the mantel-piece and leaned his elbow before the glass.

Emilia's bosom began to rise again.

She was startled to hear him laugh. A slight melancholy little burst; and then a louder one, followed by a full-toned laughter that fell short and showed the heart was not in it.

'That boy Braintop! What fun it was!' he said, looking all the while into the glass. 'Why can't we live in peace, and without bother! Is your candle alight, my dear?'

Emilia now thought that he was practising evasion.

'I will light it,' she said.

Mr. Pole gave a wearied sigh. His head being still turned to the glass, he listened with a shrouded face for her movements: saying, 'Good night; good night; I 'll light my own. There 's a dear!'

A shouting was in his ears, which seemed to syllable distinctly: 'If she goes at once, I 'm safe.'

The sight of pain at all was intolerable to him; but he had a prophetic physical warning now that to witness pain inflicted by himself would be more than he could endure.

Emilia breathed a low, 'Good night.'

'Good night, my love—all right to-morrow!' he replied briskly; and remorse touching his kind heart as the music of her 'good night' penetrated to it by thrilling avenues, he added injudiciously: 'Don't fret. We 'll see what we can do. Soon make matters comfortable.'

'I love you, and I know you will not stab me,' she answered.

'No; certainly not,' said Mr. Pole, still keeping his back to her.

Struck with a sudden anticipating fear of having to go through this scene on the morrow, he continued: 'No misunderstands, mind! Wilfrid's done with.'

There was a silence. He trusted she might be gone. Turning round, he faced her; the light of the candle throwing her pale visage into ghostly relief.

'Where is sleep for you if you part us?'

Mr. Pole flung up his arms. 'I insist upon your going to bed. Why shouldn't I sleep? Child's folly!'

Though he spoke so, his brain was in strings to his timorous ticking nerves; and he thought that it would be well to propitiate her and get her to utter some words that would not haunt his pillow.

'My dear girl! it 's not my doing. I like you. I wish you well and happy. Very fond of you;—blame circumstances, not me.' Then he murmured: 'Are black spots on the eyelids a bad sign? I see big flakes of soot falling in a dark room.'

Emilia's mazed look fleeted. 'You come between us, sir, because I have no money?'

'I tell you it 's the boy's only chance to make his hit now.' Mr. Pole stamped his foot angrily.

'And you make my Cornelia marry, though she loves another, as Wilfrid loves me, and if they do not obey you they are to be beggars! Is it you who can pray? Can you ever have good dreams? I saved my father from the sin, by leaving him. He wished to sell me. But my poor father had no money at all, and I can pardon him. Money was a bright thing to him: like other things to us. Mr. Pole! What will any one say for you!'

The unhappy merchant had made vehement efforts to perplex his hearing, that her words might be empty and not future dragons round his couch. He was looking forward to a night of sleep as a cure for the evil sensations besetting him—his only chance. The chance was going; and with the knowledge that it was unjustly torn from him—this one gleam of clear reason in his brain undimmed by the irritable storm which plucked him down —he cried out, to clear himself:

'They are beggars, both, and all, if they don't marry before two months are out. I 'm a beggar then. I 'm ruined. I sha'n't have a penny. I 'm in a workhouse. They are in good homes. They are safe, and thank their old father. Now, then; now. Shall I sleep?'

Emilia caught his staggering arm. The glazed light of his eyes went out. He sank into a chair; white as if life had issued with the secret of his life. Wonderful varying expressions had marked his features and the tones of his voice, while he was uttering that sharp, succinct confession; so that, strange as it sounded, every sentence fixed itself on her with incontrovertible force, and the meaning of the whole flashed through her mind. It

struck her too awfully for speech. She held fast to his nerveless hand, and kneeling before him, listened for his long reluctant breathing.

The 'Shall I sleep?' seemed answered.

CHAPTER XXVII

SMALL LIFE AT BROOKFIELD

For days after the foregoing scene, Brookfield was unconscious of what had befallen it. Wilfrid was trying his yacht, the ladies were preparing for the great pleasure-gathering on Besworth lawn, and shaping astute designs to exclude the presence of Mrs. Chump, for which they partly condemned themselves; but, as they said, 'Only hear her!' The excitable woman was swelling from conjecture to certainty on a continuous public cry of, ''Pon my hon'r!—d' ye think little Belloni 's gone and marrud Pole?'

Emilia's supposed flight had deeply grieved the ladies, when alarm and suspicion had subsided. Fear of some wretched male baseness on the part of their brother was happily diverted by a letter, wherein he desired them to come to him speedily. They attributed her conduct to dread of Mr. Pericles. That fervid devotee of Euterpe received the tidings with an obnoxious outburst, which made them seriously ask themselves (individually and in secret) whether he was not a moneyed brute, and nothing more. Nor could they satisfactorily answer the question. He raved: 'You let her go. Ha! what creatures you are—hein? But you find not anozer in fifty years, I say; and here you stop, and forty hours pass by, and not a sing in motion. What blood you have! It is water—not

blood. Such a voice, a verve, a style, an eye, a devil, zat girl! and all drawn up and out before ze time by a man: she is spoilt!'

He exhibited an anguish that they were not able to commiserate. Certain expressions falling from him led them to guess that he had set some plot in motion, which Emilia's flight had arrested; but his tragic outcries were all on the higher ground of the loss to Art. They were glad to see him go from the house. Soon he returned to demand Wilfrid's address. Arabella wrote it out for him with rebuking composure. Then he insisted upon having Captain Gambier's, whom he described as 'ce nonchalant dandy.'

'Him you will have a better opportunity of seeing by waiting here,' said Adela; and the captain came before Mr. Pericles had retreated. 'Ce nonchalant' was not quite true to his title, when he heard that Emilia had flown. He did not say much, but iterated 'Gone!' with an elegant frown, adding, 'She must come back, you know!' and was evidently more than commonly puzzled and vexed, pursuing the strain in a way that satisfied Mr. Pericles more thoroughly than Adela.

'She shall come back as soon as she has a collar,' growled Mr. Pericles, meaning captivity.

'If she 'd onnly come back with her own maiden name,' interjected Mrs. Chump, '*I* 'll give her a character; but, upon my hon'r—d' ye think ut possible, now . . .?'

Arabella talked over her, and rescued her father's name.

The noisy sympathy and wild speculations of the Tinleys and Copleys had to be endured. On the whole, the feeling toward Emilia was kind, and the hope that she would come to no harm was fervently expressed by all the ladies; frequently enough, also, to show the opinion that it might easily happen. On such points Mrs.

Chump never failed to bring the conversation to a block. Supported as they were by Captain Gambier, Edward Buxley, Freshfield Sumner, and more than once by Sir Twickenham (whom Freshfield, launching angry shafts, now called the semi-betrothed, the statistical cripple, and other strong things that show a developing genius for street-cries and hustings-epithets in every member of the lists of the great Rejected, or of the jilted who can affect to be philosophical), notwithstanding these aids, the ladies of Brookfield were crushed by Mrs. Chump. Her main offence was, that she revived for them so much of themselves that they had buried. 'Oh! the unutterably sordid City life!' It hung about her like a smell of London smoke. As a mere animal, they passed her by, and had almost come to a state of mind to pass her off. It was the phantom, or rather the embodiment of their First Circle, that they hated in the woman. She took heroes from the journals read by servant-maids; she thought highly of the Court of Aldermen; she went on public knees to the aristocracy; she was proud, in fact, of all City appetites. What, though none saw the peculiar sting? They felt it; and one virtue in possessing an 'ideal' is that, lodging in you as it does, it insists upon the interior being furnished by your personal satisfaction, and not by the blindness or stupidity of the outer world. Thus, in one direction, an ideal precludes humbug. The ladies might desire to cloak facts, but they had no pleasure in deception. They had the feminine power of extinguishing things disagreeable, so long as nature or the fates did them no violence. When these forces sent an emissary to confound them, as was clearly the case with Mrs. Chump, they fought. The dreadful creature insisted upon shows of maudlin affection that could not be accorded to her, so that she existed in a condition of preternatural sensitiveness. Among ladies

pretending to dignity of life, the horror of acrid complaints alternating with public offers of love from a gross woman, may be pictured in the mind's eye. The absence of Mr. Pole and Wilfrid, which caused Mrs. Chump to chafe at the restraint imposed by the presence of males to whom she might not speak endearingly, and deprived the ladies of proper counsel, and what good may be at times in masculine authority, led to one fierce battle, wherein the great shot was fired on both sides. Mrs. Chump was requested to leave the house: she declined. Interrogated as to whether she remained as an enemy, knowing herself to be so looked upon, she said that she remained to save them from the dangers they invited. Those dangers she named, observing that Mrs. Lupin, their aunt, might know them, but was as liable to be sent to sleep by a fellow with a bag of jokes as a watchdog to be quieted by a bone. The allusion here was to Mrs. Lupin's painful, partially inexcusable, incurable sense of humour, especially when a gleam of it led to the prohibited passages of life. The poor lady was afflicted so keenly that, in instances where one of her sex and position in the social scale is bound to perish rather than let even the shadow of a laugh appear, or any sign of fleshly perception or sympathy peep out, she was seen to be mutely, shockingly, penitentially convulsed: a degrading sight. And albeit repeatedly remonstrated with, she, upon such occasions, invariably turned imploring glances—a sort of frowning entreaty—to the ladies, or to any of her sex present. 'Did you not see that? Oh! can you resist it?' she seemed to gasp, as she made those fruitless efforts to drag them to her conscious level. 'Sink thou, if thou wilt,' was the phrase indicated to her. She had once thought her propensity innocent enough, and enjoyable. Her nieces had almost cured her, by sitting on her, until Mrs. Chump came to make her worst than ever.

It is to be feard that Mrs. Chump was beginning to abuse her power over the little colourless lady. We cannot, when we find ourselves possessed of the gift of sending a creature into convulsions, avoid exercising it. Mrs. Lupin was one of the victims of the modern feminine 'ideal.' She was in mind merely a woman; devout and charitable, as her nieces admitted; but radically —what? They did not like to think, or to say, what;— repugnant, seemed to be the word. A woman who consented to perceive the double-meaning, who acknowledged its suggestions of a violation of decency laughable, and who could not restrain laughter, was, in their judgement, righteously a victim. After signal efforts to lift her up, the verdict was that their Aunt Lupin did no credit to her sex. If we conceive a timorous little body of finely-strung nerves, inclined to be gay, and shrewdly apprehensive, but depending for her opinion of herself upon those about her, we shall see that Mrs. Lupin's life was one of sorrow and scourges in the atmosphere of the 'ideal.' Never did nun of the cloister fight such a fight with the flesh, as this poor little woman, that she might not give offence to the Tribunal of the Nice Feelings:— which leads us to ask, 'Is sentimentalism in our modern days taking the place of monasticism to mortify our poor humanity?' The sufferings of the Three of Brookfield under Mrs. Chump was not comparable to Mrs. Lupin's. The good little woman's soul withered at the self-contempt to which her nieces helped her daily. Laughter, far from expanding her heart and invigorating her frame, was a thing that she felt herself to be nourishing as a traitor in her bosom: and the worst was, that it came upon her like a reckless intoxication at times, possessing her as a devil might; and justifying itself, too, and daring to say, 'Am I not Nature?' Mrs. Lupin shrank from the remembrance of those moments.

In another age, the scenes between Mrs. Lupin and Mrs. Chump, greatly significant for humanity as they are, will be given without offence on one side or martyrdom on the other. At present, and before our sentimentalists are a concrete, it would be profitless rashness to depict them. When the great shots were fired off (Mrs. Chump being requested to depart, and refusing) Mrs. Lupin fluttered between the belligerents, doing her best to be a medium for the restoration of peace. In repeating Mrs. Chump's remarks, which were rendered purposely strong with Irish spice by that woman, she choked; and when she conveyed to Mrs. Chump the counter-remarks of the ladies, she provoked utterances that almost killed her. A sadder life is not to be imagined. The perpetual irritation of a desire to indulge in her mortal weakness, and listening to the sleepless conscience that kept watch over it; her certainty that it would be better for her to laugh right out, and yet her incapacity to contest the justice of her nieces' rebuke; her struggle to resist Mrs. Chump, which ended in a sensation of secret shameful liking for her—all these warring influences within were seen in her behaviour.

'I have always said,' observed Cornelia, 'that she labours under a disease.' What is more, she had always told Mrs. Lupin as much, and her sisters had echoed her. Three to one in such a case is a severe trial to the reason of solitary one. And Mrs. Lupin's case was peculiar, inasmuch as the more she yielded to Chump-temptation and eased her heart of its load of laughter, the more her heart cried out against her and subscribed to the scorn of her nieces. Mrs. Chump acted a demon's part; she thirsted for Mrs. Lupin that she might worry her. Hitherto she had not known that anything peculiar lodged in her tongue, and with no other person did she think of using it to produce a desired effect; but now the scenes

in Brookfield became hideous to the ladies, and not wanting in their trials to the facial muscles of the gentlemen. A significant sign of what the ladies were enduring was, that they ceased to speak of it in their consultations. It is a blank period in the career of young creatures when a fretting wretchedness forces them out of their dreams to action; and it is then that they will do things that, seen from the outside (*i.e.* in the conduct of others), they would hold to be monstrous, all but impossible. Or how could Cornelia persuade herself, as she certainly persuaded Sir Twickenham and the world about her, that she had a contemplative pleasure in his society? Arabella drew nearer to Edward Buxley, whom she had not treated well, and who, as she might have guessed, had turned his thoughts toward Adela; though clearly without encouragement. Adela indeed said openly to her sisters, with a Gallic ejaculation, 'Edward follows me, do you know; and he has adopted a sort of Sicilian-vespers look whenever he meets me with Captain Gambier. I could forgive him if he would draw out a dagger and be quite theatrical; but, behold, we meet, and my bourgeois grunts and stammers, and seems to beg us to believe that he means nothing whatever by his behaviour. Can you convey to his City-intelligence that he is just a trifle ill-bred?'

Now, Arabella had always seen Edward as a thing that was her own, which accounts for the treatment to which he had been subjected. A quick spur of jealousy—a new sensation—was the origin of her leaning toward Edward; and the plea of saving Adela from annoyance excused and covered it. He, for his part, scarcely concealed his irritation, until a little scented twisted note was put in his hand, which said, 'You are as anxious as I can be about our sweet lost Emilia! We believe ourselves to be on her traces.' This gave him wonderful comfort. It put Adela in a beautiful fresh light as a devoted bene-

factress and delicious intriguante. He threw off some of his most telling caricatures at this period. Adela had divined that Captain Gambier suspected his cousin Merthyr Powys of abstracting Emilia, that he might shield her from Mr. Pericles. The Captain confessed it, calmly blushing, and that he was in communication with Miss Georgiana Ford, Mr. Powys's half-sister; about whom Adela was curious, until the Captain ejaculated, 'A saint!'—whereat she was satisfied, knowing by instinct that the preference is for sinners. Their meetings usually referred to Emilia; and it was astonishing how willingly the Captain would talk of her. Adela repeated to herself, 'This is our mask,' and thus she made it the Captain's; for it must be said that the conquering Captain had never felt so full of pity to any girl or woman to whom he fancied he had done damage, as to Emilia. He enjoyed a most thorough belief that she was growing up to perplex him with her love, and he had not consequently attempted to precipitate the measure; but her flight had prematurely perplexed him. In grave debate with the ends of his moustache for a term, he concluded by accusing Merthyr Powys; and with a little feeling of spite not unknown to masculine dignity, he wrote to Merthyr's half-sister—'merely to inquire, being aware that whatever he does you have been consulted on, and the friends of this Miss Belloni are distressed by her absence.'

The ladies of Brookfield were accustomed to their father's occasional unpremeditated absences, and neither of them had felt an apprehension which she could not dismiss, until one morning Mr. Powys sent up his card to Arabella, requesting permission to speak with her alone.

CHAPTER XXVIII

GEORGIANA FORD

Georgiana Ford would have had little claim among the fair saints to be accepted by them as one of their order. Her reputation for coldness was derived from the fact of her having stood a siege from Captain Gambier. But she loved a creature of earth too well to put up a hand for saintly honours. The passion of her life centred in devotion to her half-brother. Those who had studied her said, perhaps with a touch of malignity, that her religious instinct had its source in a desire to gain some place of intercession for him. Merthyr had leaned upon it too often to doubt the strength of it, whatever its purity might be. She, when barely more than a child (a girl of sixteen), had followed him over the then luckless Italian fields—sacrificing as much for a cause that she held to be trivial, as he in the ardour of his half-fanatical worship. Her theory was: 'These Italians are in bondage, and since heaven permits it, there has been guilt. By endurance they are strengthened, by suffering chastened; so let them endure and suffer.' She would cleave to this view with many variations of pity. Merthyr's experience was tolerant to the weaker vessel's young delight in power, which makes her sometimes, though sweet and merciful by nature, enunciate Hebraic severities oracularly. He smiled, and was never weary of pointing out practical refutations. Whereat she said, 'Will a thousand instances change the principle?' When the brain, and especially the fine brain of a woman, first begins to act for itself, the work is of heavy labour; she finds herself plunging abroad on infinite seas, and

runs speedily into the anchorage of dogmas, obfuscatory saws, and what she calls principles. Here she is safe; but if her thinking was not originally the mere action of lively blood upon that battery of intelligence, she will by-and-by reflect that it is not well for a live thing to be tied to a dead, and that long clinging to safety confesses too much. Merthyr waited for Georgiana patiently. On all other points they were heart-in-heart. It was her pride to say that she loved him with no sense of jealousy, and prayed that he might find a woman, in plain words, worthy of him. This woman had not been found; she confessed that she had never seen her.

Georgiana received Captain Gambier's communication in Monmouth. Merthyr had now and then written of a Miss Belloni; but he had seemed to refer to a sort of child, and Georgiana had looked on her as another Italian pensioner. She was decisive. The moment she awoke to feel herself brooding over the thought of this girl, she started to join Merthyr. Solitude is pasturage for a suspicion. On her way she grew persuaded that her object was bad, and stopped; until the thought came, 'If he is in a dilemma, who shall help him save his sister?' And, with spiritually streaming eyes at a vision of companionship broken (but whether by his taking another adviser, or by Miss Belloni, she did not ask), Georgiana continued her journey.

At the door of Lady Gosstre's town-house she hesitated, and said in her mind, 'What am I doing? and what earthliness has come into my love for him?' Or, turning to the cry, 'Will he want me?' stung herself. Conscious that there was some poison in her love, but clinging to it not less, she entered the house, and was soon in Merthyr's arms.

'Why have you come up?' he asked.

'Were you thinking of coming to me quickly?' she murmured in reply.

He did not say yes, but that he had business in London. Nor did he say what.

Georgiana let him go.

'How miserable is such a weakness! Is this my love?' she thought again.

Then she went to her bedroom, and knelt, and prayed her Saviour's pardon for loving a human thing too well. But, if the rays of her mind were dimmed, her heart beat too forcibly for this complacent self-deceit. 'No; not too well! I cannot love him too well. I am selfish. When I say that, it is myself I am loving. To love him thrice as dearly as I do would bring me nearer to God. Love I mean, not idolatry—another form of selfishness.'

She prayed to be guided out of the path of snares.

'CAN YOU PRAY? CAN YOU PUT AWAY ALL PROPS OF SELF? THIS IS TRUE WORSHIP, UNTO WHATSOEVER POWER YOU KNEEL.'

This passage out of a favourite book of sentences had virtue to help her now in putting away the 'props of self.' It helped her for the time. She could not foresee the contest that was commencing for her.

'LOVE THAT SHRIEKS AT A MORTAL WOUND, AND BLEEDS HUMANLY, WHAT IS HE BUT A PAGAN GOD, WITH THE PASSIONS OF A PAGAN GOD?'

'Yes,' thought Georgiana, meditating, 'as different from the Christian love as a brute from a man!'

She felt that the revolution of the idea of love in her mind (all that consoled her) was becoming a temptation. Quick in her impulses, she dismissed it. 'I am like a girl!' she said scornfully. 'Like a woman' would not have flattered her. Like what did she strive to be? The picture of another self was before her—a creature calmly strong, unruffled, and a refuge to her beloved.

It was a steady light through every wind that blew, save when the heart narrowed; and then it waxed feeble, and the life in her was hungry for she knew not what.

Georgiana's struggle was to make her great passion eat up all the others. Sure of the intensity and thoroughness of her love for Merthyr, she would forecast for herself tasks in his service impossible save to one sensually dead and therefore spiritually sexless. 'My love is pure,' she would say; as if that were the talisman which rendered it superhuman. She was under the delusion that lovers' love was a reprehensible egoism. Her heart had never had place for it; and thus her nature was unconsummated, and the torment of a haunting insufficiency accompanied her sweetest hours, ready to mislead her in all but very clearest actions.

She saw, or she divined, much of this struggle; but the vision of it was fitful, not consecutive. It frightened and harassed without illuminating her. Now, upon Merthyr's return, she was moved by it just enough to take his hand and say:

'We are the same?'

'What can change us?' he replied.

'Or who?' and as she smiled up to him, she was ashamed of her smile.

'Yes, who!' he interjected, by this time quite enlightened. All subtle feelings are discerned by Welsh eyes when untroubled by any mental agitation. Brother and sister were Welsh, and I may observe that there is human nature and Welsh nature.

'Forgive me,' she said; 'I have been disturbed about you.'

Perceiving that it would be well to save her from any spiritual twists and turns that she might reach what she desired to know, he spoke out fully: 'I have not written to you about Miss Belloni lately. I think it must be

seven or eight days since I had a letter from her—you shall see it—looking as if it had been written in the dark. She gave the address of a London hotel. I went to her, and her story was that she had come to town to get Mr. Pole's consent to her marriage with his son; and that when she succeeded in making herself understood by him, the old man fell, smitten with paralysis, crying out that he was ruined, and his children beggars.'

'Ah!' said Georgiana; 'then this son is engaged to her?'

'She calls him her lover.'

'Openly?'

'Have I not told you?—"naked and unashamed."'

'Of course *that* has attracted my Merthyr!' Georgiana drew to him tenderly, breathing as one who has a burden off her heart.

'But why did she write to *you*?' the question started up.

'For this reason: it appears that Mr. Pole showed such nervous irritation at the idea of his family knowing the state he was in, that the doctor attending him exacted a promise from her not to communicate with one of them. She was alone, in great perplexity, and did what I had requested her to do. She did me the honour to apply to me for any help it was in my power to give.'

Georgiana stood eyeing the ground sideways. 'What is she like?'

'You shall see to-morrow, if you will come with me.'

'Dark, or fair?'

Merthyr turned her face to the light, laughing softly. Georgiana coloured, with dropped eyelids.

She raised her eyes under their load of shame. 'I will come gladly,' she said.

'Early to-morrow, then,' rejoined Merthyr.

On the morrow, as they were driving to the hotel,

Georgiana wanted to know whether he called 'this Miss Belloni' by her Christian name—a question so needless that her overconscious heart drummed with gratitude when she saw that he purposely spared her from one meaning look. In this mutual knowledge, mutual help, in minute as in great things, as well as in the recognition of a common nobility of mind, the love of the two was fortified.

Emilia had not been left by Mr. Powys without the protection of a woman's society in her singular position. Lady Charlotte's natural prompt kindness required no spur from her friend that she should go and brace up the spirits of a little woman, whom she pitied doubly—for loving a man who was deceiving her, and not loving one who was good for her. She went frequently to Emilia, and sat with her in the sombre hotel drawing-room. Still, frank as she was and blunt as she affected to be, she could not bring her tongue to speak of Wilfrid. If she had fancied any sensitive shuddering from the name and the subject to exist, she would have struck boldly, being capable of cruelty and, where she was permitted to see a weakness, rather fond of striking deep. A belief in the existence of Emilia's courage touched her to compassion. One day, however, she said, 'What is it you take to in Merthyr Powys?' and this brought on plain speaking.

Emilia could give no reason; and it is a peculiarity of people who ask such questions that they think a want of directness in the answer suspicious.

Lady Charlotte said gravely, 'Come, come!'

'What do you mean?' asked Emilia. 'I like so many things in him.'

'You don't like one thing chiefly?'

'I like—what do I like?—his kindness.'

'"His kindness!"' This was the sort of reply to make

the lady implacable. She seldom read others shrewdly, and could not know, that near her, Emilia thought of Wilfrid in a way that made the vault of her brain seem to echo with jarred chords. 'His kindness! What a picture is the "grateful girl!" I have seen rows of white-capped charity children giving a bob and a sniffle as the parson went down the ranks promising buns. Well! his kindness! You are right in appreciating as much as you can see. I 'll tell you why *I* like him;—because he is a gentleman. And you haven't got an idea how rare that animal is. Dear me! Should I be plainer to you if I called him a Christian gentleman? It 's the cant of a detestable school, my child. It means just this—but why should I disturb your future faith in it? The professors mainly profess to be "a comfort to young women," and I suppose you will meet your comfort, and worship them with the "growing mind"; and I must confess that they bait it rather cunningly; nothing else would bite. They catch almost all the raw boys who have anything in them. But for me, Merthyr himself would have been caught long ago. There 's no absolute harm in them, only that they 're a sentimental compromise. I deny their honesty; and if it 's flatly proved, I deny their intelligence. Well! this you can't understand.'

'I have not understood you at all,' said Emilia.

'No? It 's the tongue that 's the natural traitor to a woman, and takes longer runs with every added year. I suppose you know that Mr. Powys wishes to send you to Italy?'

'I do,' said Emilia.

'When are you going?'

'I am not going?'

'Why?'

Emilia's bosom rose. She cried 'Dear lady!' on the

fall of it, and was scarce audible—adding, 'Do you love Wilfrid?'

'Well, you have brought me to the point quickly,' Lady Charlotte remarked. 'I don't commonly beat the bush long myself. Love him! You might as well ask me my age. The indiscretion would be equal, and the result the same. Love! I have a proper fear of the word. When two play at love they spoil the game. It 's enough that he says he loves me.'

Emilia looked relieved. 'Poor lady!' she sighed.

'Poor!' Lady Charlotte echoed, with curious eyes fixed on the puzzle beside her.

'Tell me you will not believe him,' Emilia continued. 'He is mine; I shall never give him up. It is useless for you or any one else to love him. I know what love is now. Stop while you can. I can be sorry for you, but I will not let him go from me. He is my lover.'

Emilia closed her lips abruptly. She produced more effect than was visible. Lady Charlotte drew out a letter, saying, 'Perhaps this will satisfy you.'

'Nothing!' cried Emilia, jumping to her feet.

'Read it—read it; and, for heaven's sake, ma fille sauvage, don't think I 'm here to fight for the man! He is not Orpheus; and our modern education teaches us that it 's we who are to be run after. Will you read it?'

'No.'

'Will you read it to please me?'

Emilia changed from a look of quiet opposition to gentleness of feature. 'Why will it please you if I read that he has flattered you? I never lie about what I feel; I think men do.' Her voice sank.

'You won't allow yourself to imagine, then, that he has spoken false to you?'

'Tell me,' retorted Emilia, 'are you sure in your heart —as sure as it beats each time—that he loves you? You are not.'

'It seems that we are dignifying my gentleman remarkably,' said Lady Charlotte. 'When two women fight for a man, that is almost a meal for his yanity. Now, listen. I am not, as they phrase it, in love. I am an experienced person—what is called a woman of the world. I should not make a marriage unless I had come to the conclusion that I could help my husband, or he me. Do me the favour to read this letter.'

Emilia took it and opened it slowly. It was a letter in the tone of the gallant paying homage with some fervour. Emilia searched every sentence for the one word. That being absent, she handed back the letter, her eyes lingering on the signature.

'Do you see what he says?' asked Lady Charlotte; 'that I can be a right hand to him, as I believe I can.'

'He writes like a friend.' Emilia uttered this as when we have a contrast in the mind.

'You excuse him for writing to me in that style?'

'Yes; he may write to any woman like that.'

'He has latitude! You really fancy that 's the sort of letter a friend would write?'

'That is how Mr. Powys would write to me,' said Emilia.

Lady Charlotte laughed. 'My unhappy Merthyr!'

'Only if I could be a great deal older,' Emilia hastened to add; and Lady Charlotte slightly frowned, but rubbed it out with a smile.

Rising, the lady said: 'I have spoken to you upon equal terms; and remember, very few women would have done what I have done. You are cared for by

Merthyr Powys, and that 's enough. It would do you no harm to fix your eyes upon him. You won't get him; but it would do you no harm. He has a heart, as they call it; whatever it is, it 's as strong as a cable. He is a knight of the antique. He is specially guarded, however. Well, he insists that you are his friend; so you are mine, and that is why I have come to you and spoken to you. You will be silent about it, I need not say. No one but yourself is aware that Lieutenant Pole does me the honour to liken me to the good old gentleman who accompanied Telemachus in his voyages, and chooses me from among the handmaidens of earth. On this head you will promise to be silent.'

Lady Charlotte held forth her hand. Emilia would not take it before she had replied, 'I knew this before you came,' and then she pressed the extended fingers.

Lady Charlotte drew her close. 'Has Wilfrid taken you into his confidence so far?'

Emilia explained that she had heard it from his father.

The lady's face lit up as from a sting of anger. 'Very well—very well,' she said; and, presently, 'You are right when you speak of the power of lying in men. Observe—Wilfrid told me that not one living creature knew there was question of an engagement between us. What would you do in my case?'

Emilia replied, 'Forgive him; and I should think no more of it.'

'Yes. It would be right; and, presuming him to have the vice, I could be of immense service to him, if at least he does not lie habitually. But this is a description of treachery, you know.'

'Oh!' cried Emilia, 'what kind of treachery is that, if he only will keep his heart open for me to give all mine to it!'

She stood clutching her hands in the half-sobbing ecstasy which signalises a spiritual exaltation built on disquiet. She had shown small emotion hitherto. The sight of it was like the sight of a mighty hostile power to Lady Charlotte—a power that moved her—that challenged, and irritated, and subdued her. For she saw there something that she had not; and being of a nature leaning to great-mindedness, though not of the first rank, she could not meanly mask her own deficiency by despising it. To do this is the secret evil by which souls of men and women stop their growth.

Lady Charlotte decided now to say good-bye. Her parting was friendly—the form of it consisting of a nod, an extension of the hand, and a kind word or two.

When alone, Emilia wondered why she kept taking long breaths, and tried to correct herself: but the heart laboured. Yet she seemed to have no thought in her mind; she had no active sensation of pity or startled self-love. She went to smooth Mr. Pole's pillow, as to a place of forgetfulness. The querulous tyrannies of the invalid relieved her; but the heavy lifting of her chest returned the moment she was alone. She mentioned it to the doctor, who prescribed for liver, informing her that the said organ conducted one of the most important functions of her bodily system.

Emilia listened to the lecturer, and promised to take his medicine, trusting to be perfectly quieted by the nauseous draught; but when Mr. Powys came, she rushed up to him, and fell with a cry upon his breast, murmuring broken words that Georgiana might fairly interpret as her suspicions directed. Nor had she ever seen Merthyr look as he did when their eyes next met.

CHAPTER XXIX

FIRST SCOURGING OF THE FINE SHADES

THE card of Mr. Powys found Arabella alone in the house. Mrs. Lupin was among village school-children; Mrs. Chump had gone to London to see whether anything was known of Mr. Pole at his office, where she fell upon the youth Braintop, and made him her own for the day. Adela was out in the woods, contemplating nature; and Cornelia was supposed to be walking whither her stately fancy drew her.

'Will you take long solitary walks unprotected?' she was asked.

'I have a parasol,' she replied; and could hear, miles distant, the domestic comments being made on her innocence; and the story it would be—'She thinks of no possible danger but from the sun.'

A little forcing of her innocence now was necessary as an opiate for her conscience. She was doing what her conscience could only pardon on the plea of her extreme innocence. The sisters, and the fashion at Brookfield, permitted the assumption, and exaggerated it willingly. It chanced, however, that Adela had reason to feel discontented. It was a breach of implied contract, she thought, that Cornelia should, as she did only yesterday, tell her that she had seen Edward Buxley in the woods, and that she was of opinion that the air of the woods was bad for her. *Not* to see would have been the sisterly obligation, in Adela's idea—especially when seeing embraced things that no loving sister should believe.

Bear in mind that we are sentimentalists. The eye is our servant, not our master; and so are the senses

generally. We are not bound to accept more than we choose from them. Thus we obtain delicacy; and thus, as you will perceive, our civilization, by the aid of the sentimentalists, has achieved an effective varnish. There, certainly, to the vulgar mind a tail is visible. The outrageous philosopher declares vehemently that no beast of the field or the forest would own such a tail. (His meaning is, that he discerns the sign of the animal slinking under the garb of the stately polished creature. I have all the difficulty in the world to keep him back and let me pursue my course.) These philosophers are a bad-mannered body. Either in opposition, or in the support of them, I maintain simply that the blinking sentimentalist helps to make civilization what it is, and civilization has a great deal of merit.

'Did you not leave your parasol behind you at Ipley?' said Adela, as she met Cornelia in the afternoon.

Cornelia coloured. Her pride supported her, and she violated fine shades painfully in her response: 'Mr. Barrett left me there. Is that your meaning?'

Adela was too much shocked to note the courageousness of the reply. 'Well! if all we do is to come into broad daylight!' was her horrified mental ejaculation.

The veil of life was about to be lifted for these ladies. They found Arabella in her room, crying like an unchastened school-girl; and their first idea was one of intense condemnation—fresh offences on the part of Mrs. Chump being conjectured. Little by little Arabella sobbed out what she had heard that day from Mr. Powys.

After the first stupor Adela proposed to go to her father instantly, and then suggested that they should all go. She continued talking in random suggestions, and with singular heat, as if she conceived that the sensibility of her sisters required to be aroused. By moving and acting, it seemed to her that the prospect

of a vast misery might be expunged, and that she might escape from showing any likeness to Arabella's shamefully-discoloured face. It was impossible for her to realize grief in her own bosom. She walked the room in a nervous tremour, shedding a note of sympathy to one sister and to the other. At last Arabella got fuller command of her voice. When she had related that her father's positive wish, furthered by the doctor's special injunction to obey it scrupulously, was that they were not to go to him in London, and not to breathe a word of his illness, but to remain at Brookfield entertaining friends, Adela stamped her foot, saying that it was more than human nature could bear.

'If we go,' said Arabella, 'the London doctor assured Mr. Powys that he would not answer for papa's life.'

'But, good heavens! are we papa's enemies? And why may Mr. Powys see him if we, his daughters, cannot? Tell me how Mr. Powys met him and knew of it! Tell me—— I am bewildered. I feel that we are cheated in some way. Oh! tell me something clear.'

Arabella said calmingly: 'Emilia is with papa. She wrote to Mr. Powys. Whether she did rightly or not we have not now to inquire. I believe that she thought it right.'

'Entertain friends!' interjected Adela. 'But papa cannot possibly mean that we are to go through—to—the fête on Besworth Lawn, Bella! It 's in two days from this dreadful day.'

'Papa has mentioned it to Mr. Powys; he desires us not to postpone it. We . . .' Arabella's voice broke piteously.

'Oh! but this is torture!' cried Adela, with a deplorable vision of the looking-glass rising before her, as she felt the tears sting her eyelids. 'This cannot be!

No father would . . . not loving us as dear papa does! To be quiet! to sit and be gay! to flaunt at a fête! Oh, mercy! mercy! Tell me—he left us quite well—no one could have guessed. I remember he looked at me from the carriage window. Tell me—it must be some moral shock—what do you attribute it to? Wilfrid cannot be the guilty one. We have been only too compliant to papa's wishes about that woman. Tell me what you think it can be!'

A voice said, 'Money!'

Which of the sisters had spoken Adela did not know. It was bitter enough that one could be brought to utter the thing, even if her ideas were so base as to suspect it. The tears now came dancing over her under-lids like triumphing imps. 'Money!' echoed through her again and again. Curiously, too, she had no occasion to ask how it was that money might be supposed to have operated on her father's health. Unable to realize to herself the image of her father lying ill and suffering, but just sufficiently touched by what she could conceive of his situation, the bare whisper of money came like a foul insult to overwhelm her in floods of liquid self-love. She wept with that last anguish of a woman who is compelled to weep, but is incapable of finding any enjoyment in her tears. Cornelia and Arabella caught her hands; she was the youngest, and had been their pet. It gratified them that Adela should show a deep and keen feeling. Adela did not check herself from a demonstration that enabled her to look broadly, as it were, on her own tenderness of heart. Following many outbursts, she asked, 'And the illness—what is it? not its cause—itself!'

A voice said, 'Paralysis!'

Adela's tears stopped. She gazed on both faces, trying with open mouth to form the word.

CHAPTER XXX

OF THE DOUBLE-MAN IN US, AND THE GREAT FIGHT WHEN THESE ARE FULL-GROWN

Flying from port to port to effect an exchange of stewards (the endless occupation of a yacht proprietor), Wilfrid had no tidings from Brookfield. The night before the gathering on Besworth Lawn he went to London and dined at his Club—a place where youths may drink largely of the milk of this world's wisdom. Wilfrid's romantic sentiment was always corrected by an hour at his Club. After dinner he strolled to a not perfectly regulated theatre, in company with a brother officer; and when they had done duty before the scenes for a space of time, they lounged behind to disenchant themselves, in obedience to that precocious cynicism which is the young man's extra-luxury. The first figure that caught Wilfrid's attention there was Mr. Pericles, in a white overcoat, stretched along a sofa—his eyelids being down, though his eyes were evidently vigilant beneath. A titter of ladies present told of some recent interesting commotion.

'Only a row between that rich Greek fellow who gave the supper, and Marion,' a vivacious dame explained to Wilfrid. 'She 's in one of her jealous fits; she 'd be jealous if her poodle-dog went on its hind-legs to anybody else.'

'Poodle, by Jove!' said Wilfrid. 'Pericles himself looks like an elongated poodle shaved up to his moustache. Look at him. And he plays the tyrant, does he?'

'Oh! she stands that. Some of those absurd women like it, I think. She 's fussing about another girl.'

'You wouldn't?'

'What man 's worth it?'

'But, would you?'

'It depends upon the "him," monsieur.'

'Depends upon his being very handsome!'

'And good.'

'And rich?'

'No!' the lady fired up. 'There you don't know us.'

The colloquy became almost tender, until she said, 'Isn't this gassy, and stifling? I confess I do like a carriage, and Richmond on a Sunday. And then, with two daughters, you know! But what I complain of is her folly in being *in love*, or something like it, with a rich fellow.'

'Love the poor devil—manage the rich, you mean.'

'Yes, of course; that makes them both happy.'

'It 's a method of being charitable to two.'

A rather fleshy fairy now entered, and walked straight up to the looking-glass to examine her paint—pronouncedly turning her back to the sofa, where Mr. Pericles still lay at provoking full length. Her panting was ominous of a further explosion.

'Innocent child!' in the mockery of a foreign accent, commenced it; while Wilfrid thought how unjustly and coldly critically he had accused his little Emilia of vulgarity, now that he had this feminine display of it swarming about him.

'Innocent child, indeed! Be as deaf as you like, you shall hear. And sofas are not made for men's dirty boots, in *this* country. I believe they 're all pigs abroad —the men; and the women—cats! Oh! don't open your eyes—don't speak, pray. You 're certain I must go when the bell rings. You 're waiting for that, you unmanly dog!'

'A pig,' Mr. Pericles here ventured to remind her, murmuring as one in a dream.

'A peeg!' she retorted mildly, somewhat mollified by her apparent success. But Mr. Pericles had relapsed into his exasperating composure. The breath of a deliberate and undeserved peacefulness continued to be drawn in by his nostrils.

At the accustomed warning there was an ostentatious rustle of retiring dresses; whereat Mr. Pericles chose to proclaim himself awake. The astute fairy-fury immediately stepped before him.

'*Now* you can't go on pretending sleep. You shall hear, and everybody shall hear. You *know* you 're a villain! You 're a wolf seeking . . .'

Mr. Pericles waved his hand, and she was caught by the wrist and told that the scene awaited her.

'Let them wait!' she shouted, and, sharpening her cry as she was dragged off, 'Dare to take that girl to Italy! I know what that means, with you. An Englishman might mean right—but you! You think you 've been dealing with a fool! Why, I can stop this in a minute, and I will. It 's you 're the fool! Why, I know her father: he plays in the orchestra. I know her name—Belloni!'

Up sprang the Greek like a galvanized corpse; while two violent jerks from the man hauling her out rattled the laugh of triumph which burst from her. At the same time Wilfrid strove forward, with the frown of one still bent listening, and he and Pericles were face to face. The eyebrows of the latter shot up in a lively arch. He made a motion toward the ceremony of 'shake-hands'; but, perceiving no correspondent overture, grinned, 'It is warm—ha?'

'You feel the heat? Step outside a minute,' said Wilfrid.

'Oh, no!' Mr. Pericles looked pleasantly sagacious. 'Ze draught—a cold.'

'*Will* you come?' pursued Wilfrid.

'Many sanks!'

Wilfrid's hand was rising. At this juncture his brother officer slipped out some languid words in his ear, indicative of his astonishment that he should be championing a termagant; and horror at the idea of such a thing being publicly imagined, tamed Wilfrid quickly. He recovered himself with his usual cleverness. Seeing the signs of hostility vanish, Mr. Pericles said, 'You are on a search for your father? You have found him? Hom! I should say a maladie of nerfs will come to him. A pin fall—he start! A storm at night—he is out dancing among his ships of venture! Not a bid of corage!—which is bad. If you shall find Mr. Pole for to-morrow on ze lawn, vary glad.'

With a smile compounded of sniffing dog and Parisian obsequiousness, Mr. Pericles passed, thinking 'He has not got her': for such was his deduction if he saw that a man could flush for a woman's name.

Wilfrid stood like a machine with a thousand wheels in revolt. Sensations pricked at ideas, and immediately left them to account for their existence as they best could. The ideas committed suicide without a second's consideration. He felt the great gurgling sea in which they were drowned heave and throb. Then came a fresh set, that poised better on the slack-rope of his understanding. By degrees, a buried dread in his brain threw off its shroud. The thought that there was something wrong with his father stood clearly over him, to be swallowed at once in the less tangible belief that a harm had come to Emilia—not was coming, but had come. Passion thinks wilfully when it thinks at all.

That night he lay in a deep anguish, revolving the means by which he might help and protect her. There seemed no way open, save by making her his own; and did he belong to himself? What bound him to Lady Charlotte? She was not lovely or loving. He had not even kissed her hand; yet she held him in a chain.

The two men composing most of us at the outset of actual life began their deadly wrestle within him, both having become awakened. If they wait for circumstance, that steady fire will fuse them into one, who is commonly a person of some strength; but throttling is the custom between them, and we are used to see men of murdered halves. These men have what they fought for: they are unaware of any guilt that may be charged against them, though they know that they do not embrace Life; and so it is that we have vague discontent too universal. Change, O Lawgiver! the length of our minority, and let it not end till this battle is thoroughly fought out in approving daylight. The period of our duality should be one as irresponsible in your eyes as that of our infancy. Is he we call a young man an individual—who is a pair of alternately kicking scales? Is he educated, when he dreams not that he is divided? He has drunk Latin like a vital air, and can quote what he remembers of Homer; but how has he been fortified for this tremendous conflict of opening manhood, which is to our life here what is the landing of a soul to the life to come?

Meantime, it is a bad business when the double-man goes about kneeling at the feet of more than one lady. Society (to give that institution its due) permits him to seek partial invulnerability by dipping himself in a dirty Styx, which corrects, as we hear said, the adolescent tendency to folly. Wilfrid's sentiment had served him

(well or ill as it may be), by keeping him from a headlong plunge in the protecting river; and his folly was unchastened. He did not even contemplate an escape from the net at Emilia's expense. The idea came. The idea will come to a young man in such a difficulty. 'My mistress! My glorious stolen fruit! My dark angel of love!' He deserves a little credit for seeing that Emilia never could be his mistress, in the debased sense of the term. Union with her meant life-long union, he knew. Ultimate mental subjection he may also have seen in it, unconsciously. For, hazy thoughts of that nature may mix with the belief that an alliance with her degrades us, in this curious hotch-potch of emotions known to the world as youthful man. A wife superior to her husband makes him ridiculous wilfully, if the wretch is to be laughed at; but a mistress thus ill-matched cannot fail to cast the absurdest light on her monstrous dwarf-custodian. Wilfrid had the sagacity to perceive, and the keen apprehension of ridicule to shrink from, the picture. Besides, he was beginning to love Emilia. His struggle now was to pluck his passion from his heart; and such was already his plight that he saw no other way of attempting it than by taking horse and riding furiously in the direction of Besworth.

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